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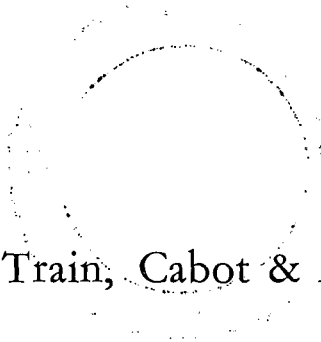

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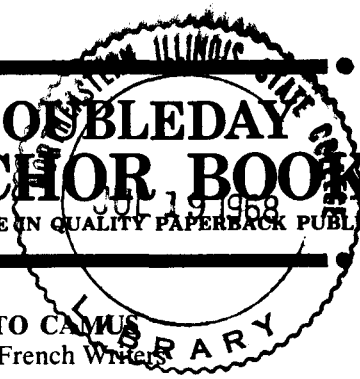

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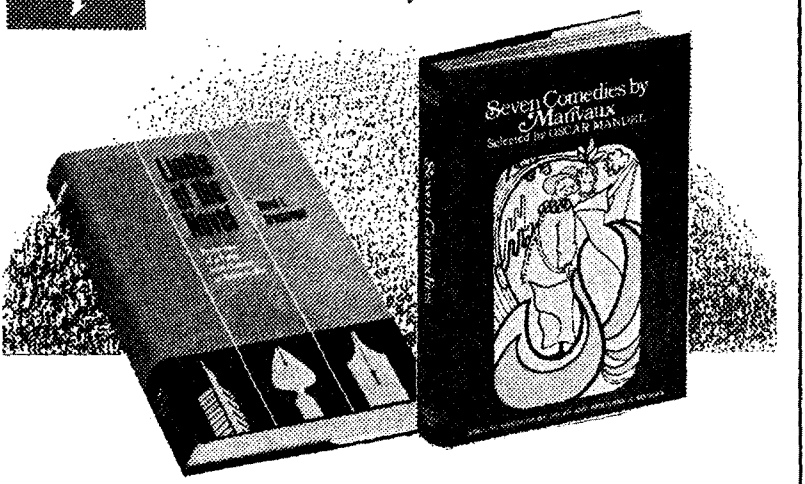

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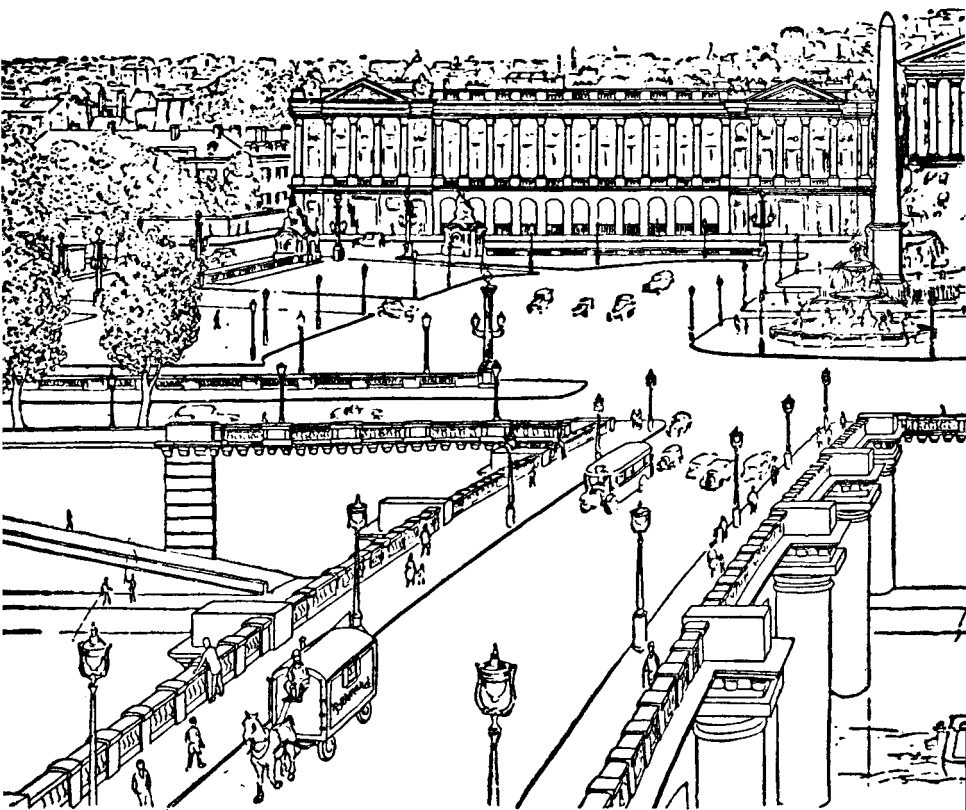

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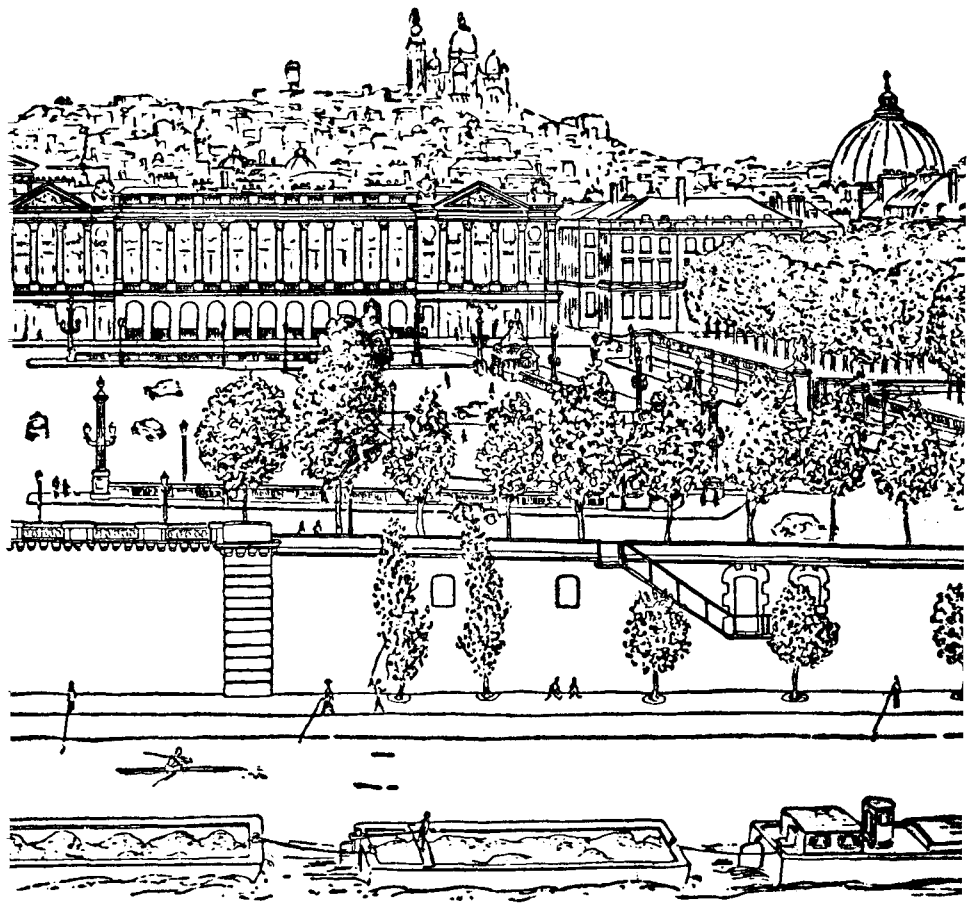

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The Pleasures of Peace

Kenneth Koch

Another ribald tale of the good times at Madame Lipsky's.
Giorgio Finogle had come in with an imitation of the latest
Russian poet,
The one who wrote the great "Complaint About the Peanut
Farm" which I read to you last year at Mrs. Riley's,
Do you remember? and then of course Giorgio had written
this imitation
So he came in with it....Where was I and what was I saying?
The big beer parlor was filled with barmaids and men named
Stuart
Who were all trying to buy a big red pitcher of beer for an
artiste named Alma Stuart
Whom each claimed as his very own because of the similarity
in names—
This in essence was Buddy's parody—O Giorgio, you idiot,
Marian Stuart snapped,
It all has something to do with me! But no, Giorgio replied,
Biting in a melancholy way the edge off a cigar-paper-
patterned envelope
In which he had been keeping the Poem for many days
Waiting to show it to his friends. And actually it's not a
parody at all,
I just claimed it was, out of embarrassment. It's a poetic
present for you all,
All of whom I love! Is it capable to love more than one—I
wonder! Alma cried,

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And we went out onto the bicycle-shaped dock where a
malicious swarm of mosquitoes
Were parlaying after having invaded the old beer parlor.
The men named Stuart were now involved in a fight to the death
But the nearer islands lay fair in the white night light.
Shall we embark toward them? I said, placing my hand upon
one exceedingly gentle
And fine. A picture of hairnets is being projected. Here
Comes someone with Alma Stuart! Is it real, this night? Or
have we a gentle fantasy?
The Russian poet appears. He seems to consider it real all right.
He's
Quite angry. Where's the Capitalist fairy that put me down?
he squirts
At our nomadic simplicity. "Complaint About the Peanut
Farm" is a terrific poem. Yes,
In a way, yes. The Hairdresser of Night engulfs them all in
foam.

"I love your work, *The Pleasures of Peace*," the Professor said
to me next day;
"I think it adequately encompasses the hysteria of our era
And puts certain people in their rightful place. Chapeau!
Bravo!"
"You don't get it," I said. "I like all this. I called this poem
Pleasures of Peace because I'm not sure they will be lasting!
I wanted people to be able to see what these pleasures are
That they may come back to them." "But they are all so
hysterical, so—so transitory,"
The critic replied. "I mean, how can you—what kind of
pleasures are these?
They seem more like pains to me—if I may say what I mean."
"Well, I don't know, Professor," I said; "permanent joys
Have so far been denied this hysterical person. Though I
confess
Far other joys I've had and will describe in time.
And then too there's the pleasure of *writing* these—perhaps to
experience is not the same."

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The Professor paused, lightly, upon the temple stair.
"I will mention you among the immortals, Ken," he said,
"Because you have the courage of what you believe.
But there I will never mention those sniveling rats
Who only claim to like these things because they're fashionable."
"Professor!" I cried, "My darling! my dream!" And she stripped, and I saw there
Creamy female marble, the waist and thighs of which I had always dreamed,
"Professor! Loved one! why the disguise?" "It was a test," she said,
"Of which you have now only passed the first portion. You must write More, and More—"
"And be equally persuasive?" I questioned, but She
Had vanished through the Promontory door.

So now I must devote my days to The Pleasures of Peace—
To my contemporaries I'll leave the Horrors of War,
They can do them better than I—each poet shares only a portion
Of the vast Territory of Rhyme. Here in Peace shall I stake out
My temporal and permanent claim. But such silver as I find
I will give to the Universe—the gold I'll put in other poems.
Thus in time there'll be a mountain range of gold
Of considerable interest. Oh may you come back in time
And in my lifetime to see it, most perfect and most delectable reader!
We poets in our youth begin with fantasies,
But then at least we think they may be realities—
The poems we create in our age
Require your hand upon our shoulder, your eye on our page.

Oh Norman Robinson, the airplane, the village, the batteries,
All this I remember, the Cheese-o-Drome, the phallic whips, the cucumbers,
The ginger from Australia, the tiny whorehouses no bigger than a phallus's door,

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The evenings without any cucumbers, the phallus's people,
The old men trailing blue lassos from door to door,
Who are they all, anyway? I was supposed to be on my way
to Boston
To go to college or get elected to the Legislature
And now I'm here with a lot of cowboys who talk spiritual
Dutch! Let
Me out of here! The lumberyard smelled of the sweet calla lilies
The courtyard was fragrant with thyme. I released your hand
And walked into the Mexicana Valley, where my father was
first a cowboy.
I take a genuine interest in the people of this country
Yes sir I think you might even call me Coleman the Dutch
but now the night sky fills with fairies
It is all that modern stuff beginning to happen again, well,
let it—
We robots tell the truth about old Gabby
But when the shirtfront scuffs we yell for Labby
It is a scientific stunt
Which Moonlight has brought you from Australia
Sit it down on this chair shaped like a pirate
When you have come three times I will give you a silverware
hazelnut
With which you can escape from time
For this I'm calling in all the poets who take dope
To help me out, here they come
Oh is there room in the universe for such as we?
They say, but though we cannot make our Time
Stand still, yet we'll him silver like a Dime.
Inversions yet! and not even sexual ones!
O Labrador, you are the sexual Pennsylvania of our times!

Chapter Thirty Seven.
On the Planisphere everyone was having a nut
When suddenly my Lulu appeared.
She was a big broad about six feet seven
And she had a red stone in her ear
Which was stringent in its beauty.

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I demanded at once the removal of people from the lobby
So we could begin to down ABC tablets and start to feel
funny
But Mordecai La Schlomp our Leader replied that we did not
need any
That a person could feel good without any artificial means.

If I love you, a mother bird says to the whalebird's father,
It's not because I want you to be untrue to Mrs. Senior
Whalebird, now you really know that don't you?
You—treacherous bitch! shouted the enraged Whalebird
leaping onto her painted nylon pyjamas
With his oriental feet until she screamed and bejibbered
And the cast-filled eye of the moon sinks into the sea
Sometimes wandering along this coast a lonely Indian boy
Would begin to cry for his mamma, and a wandering star
Would spurt in sympathy
Some silver come into the shiny sea.

Good night, Frank Robinson
And Gypsy Rose Lee,
I am tired and I want to lie down.
All day I have walked along this deliberate coastline
Trying as hard as I could to write everything down—
And now you see what has come of it, I mean one star,
I mean one star and all that is left in the cupboard
Is one violet couplet of lights.
Perhaps if you could agree
To step out of that coat...

Here are listed all the Pleasures of Peace that there could
possibly be.
Among them are the pleasures of Memory (which Delmore
Schwartz celebrated), the pleasures of autonomy,
The pleasures of agoraphobia and the sudden release
Of the agoraphobic person from the identified marketplace,
the pleasures of roving over you

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And rolling over the beach, of being in a complicated car, of sleeping,
Of drawing ropes with you, of planning a deranged comic strip, of shifting knees
At the accelerator pump, of blasphemy, of cobra settlement in a dilapidated skin country
Without clops, and therefore every pleasure is also included; which, after these—

Oh the Pleasures of Peace are infinite and they cannot be counted—
One single piece of pink mint chewing gum contains more pleasures
Than the whole rude gallery of war! And the moon passes by
In an otherwise undistinguished lesson on the geography of this age
Which has had fifty-seven good lovers and ninety-six wars. By Giorgio Finogle.

It turns out that we're competing for the Peace Award,
Giorgio Finogle and I. We go into the hair parlor, the barber—
We get to talking about war and about peace.
The barber feels that we are really good people at heart
Even though his own views turn out to be conservative.
"I've read Finogle's piece, the part of it that was in *Smut*," he
Says, "and I liked it. Yours, Koch, I haven't yet seen,
But Alyne and Francie told me that you were the better poet."
"I don't know," I said. "Giorgio is pretty good." And Giorgio comes back from the bathroom
Now, with a grin on his face. "I've got an idea for my
Pleasures of Peace," he says; "I'm going to make it include
Each person in the universe discussing their own bag—
Translation, their main interest, and what they want to be—"
"You'll never finish it, Giorgio," I said. "At least I'll
Get started," he replied, and he ran out of the barbershop.

In the quiet night we take turns riding horseback and falling asleep.

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Your breasts are more beautiful than a gold mine.
I think I'll become a professional man.
The reason we are up-to-date is we're some kind of freaks.
I don't know what to tell the old man
But he is concerned with two kinds of phenomena and I am
interested in neither. What *are* you interested in?
Being some kind of freaks, I think. Let's go to Transylvania.
I don't understand your buddy all the time. Who?
The one with HANDLEBAR written across his head.
He's a good guy, he just doesn't see the difference between a
man and a bike. If I love you
It's because you belong to and have a sublime tolerance
For such people. Yes, but in later life, I mean—
It is Present Life we've got to keep up on the screen,
Isn't it. Well yes, she said, but—
I am very happy that you are interested in it. The French
poodle stopped being Irish entirely
And we are all out of the other breeds.
The society woman paused, daintily, upon the hotel stair.
No, I must have a poodle, said she; not an Irish setter
Would satisfy me in my mad passion for the poodle breeds!
As usual, returning to the bed
I find that you are inside it and sound asleep. I smile happily
and look at your head.
It is regular-size and has beautiful blonde hair all around it.
Some is lying across the pillow. I touch it with my feet
Then leap out the window into the public square,
And I tune my guitar.
"O Mistress Mine, where are you roving?" That's my tune!
roars Finogle, and he
Comes raging out of the *Beefsteak*—I was going to put that in
MY Pleasures of Peace.
Oh normal comportment! even you too I shall include in the
Pleasures of Peace,
And you, relative humidity five hundred and sixty-two
degrees!
But what of you, poor sad glorious aqueduct
Of boorish ashes made by cigarettes smoked at the Cupcake

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Award—And Sue Ellen Musgrove steps on one of my feet.
"Hello!"
She says. "You're that famous COKE, aren't you,
That no one can drink? When are you going to give us your famous Iliad
That everyone's been talking of, I mean your Pleasures of Peace!"

Life changes as the universe changes, but the universe changes
More slowly, as bedevilments increase.
Sunlight comes through a clot for example
Which Zoo Man has thrown on the floor. It is the Night of the Painted Pyjamas
And the Liberals are weeping for peace. The Conservatives are raging for it.
The Independents are staging a parade. And we are completely naked
Walking through the bedroom for peace. I have this friend who had myopia
So he always had to get very close to people
And girls thought he was trying to make out—
Why didn't he get glasses?—He was a Pacifist! The Moon shall overcome!

Outside in the bar yard the Grecians are screaming for peace
And the Alsatians, the Albanians, the Alesians, the Rubans, the Aleutians,
And the slanty-eyed Iranians, all, all are screaming for peace.
They shall win it, their peace, because I am going to help them!
And he leaped out the window for peace!
Headline: GIORGIO FINOGLE,
NOTED POET, LAST NIGHT LEAPED OUT THE WINDOW FOR PEACE.
ASIDE FROM HEAD INJURIES HIS CONDITION IS REPORTED NORMAL.
But Giorgio never was normal! Oh the horrors of peace,
I mean of peace-fighting! But Giorgio is all right,

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He is still completely himself. "I am going to throw this
hospital
Bed out the window for peace," when we see him, he says.
And, "Well, I guess your poem will be getting way ahead of
mine now," he says
Sadly, ripping up an envelope for peace and weakly holding
out his hand
For my girl, Ellen, to stroke it; "I will no longer be the most
famous poet
For peace. You will, and you know it." "But you jumped out
the
Window, Finogle," I said, "and your deed shall live longer
In men's imaginations than any verse." But he looked at the
sky
Through the window's beautiful eye and he said, "Kenneth,
I have not written one word
Of my Poem for Peace for three weeks. I've struck a snarl
And that's why (I believe) I jumped out the
Window—pure poetic frustration. Now tell them all that,
how
They'll despise me, oh sob sob—" "Giorgio," I said, trying to
calm him down but laughing
So hard I could barely digest the dinner of imagination
In which your breasts were featured as on a Popeye card
When winter has lighted the lanterns and the falls are asleep
Waiting for next day's shards, "Giorgio," I said, "the
pleasures—"
But hysteria transported us all.

When I awoke you were in a star-shaped muffin, I was in a
loaf of bread
Shaped like a camera, and Giorgio was still in his hospital bed
But a huge baker loomed over us. One false moof and I die
you! he said
In a murderous throaty voice and I believe in the yellow
leaves, the
Orange, the red leaves of autumn, the tan leaves, and the
promoted ones

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Of green, of green and blue. Sometimes walking through an ordinary garden
You will see a bird, and the overcoat will fall from your
Shoulders, slightly, exposing one beautiful curve
On which sunbeams alighting forget to speak a single word
To their parent sun and are thus cut off
Without a heating unit, but need none being on your breast
Which I have re-christened "Loaves" for the beginning of this year
In which I hope the guns won't fire any more, the baker sang
To his baker lady, and then he had totally disappeared.
It looks as though everyone were going to be on our side!

And the flowers came out, and they were on our side,
Even the yellow little ones that grow beside your door
And the huge orange ones were bending to one side
As we walked past them, I looked into your blue eyes
And I said, "If we come out of this door
Any more, let it be to enter only this nervous paradise
Of peaceful living conditions, and if Giorgio is roped down
Let them untie him, so he can throw his hospital bed out the door
For all we need besides peace, which is considerable, but first we need that—"

Daredevil, Julian and Maddalo, and John L. Lewis
Are running down the stairways for peace, they are gathering the ice
And throwing it in buckets, they are raising purple parasols for peace
And on top of these old sunlight sings her song, "New lights, old lights again, blue lights for peace,
Red lights for the low, insulted parasol, and a few crutches thrown around for peace"—
Oh contentment is the key
To continuing exploration of the nations and their feet;
Therefore, andiamo—the footfall is waiting in the car
And peaceful are the markets and the sneaks;

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Peaceful are the Garfinkle pingpong balls
And peaceful are the blooms beneath the sea
Peaceful are the unreserved airplane loops and the popularly guided blips
Also the Robert Herrick stone sings a peaceful song
And the banana factory is getting hip, and the pigs' Easter party too is beginning to join in a general celebration
And the women and men of old Peru and young Haifa and ancient Japan and beautiful young rippling Lake Tahoe
And hairy old Boston and young Freeport and young Santo Domingo and old father Candelabra the Chieftain of Hoboes
Are rolling around the parapets for peace, and now the matadors are throwing in
Huge blops of canvas and the postgraduates are filling in
As grocery dates at peanut dances and the sunlight is filling in
Every human world canvas with huge and luminous pleasure gobs of peace—
And the Tintorettos are looking very purple for peace
And the oyster campus is beginning its peaceful song—

Oh let it be concluded, including the medals!
Peace will come thrusting out of the sky
Tomorrow morning, to bomb us into quietude.
For a while we can bid goodbye
To the frenesies of this poem, The Pleasures of Peace.
When there is peace we will not need anything but bread
Stars and plaster with which to begin.
Roaming from one beard to another we shall take the tin
From the mines and give it to roaring Fidel Castro.
Where Mao Tse Tung lies buried in ocean fields of sleeping cars
Our Lorcaesque decisions will clonk him out
And resurrect him to the rosebuddy sky
Of early evening.
And the whip-shaped generals of Hanoi
Shall be taken in overcoats to visit the sky
And the earth will be gasping for joy!

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"A wonder!" "A rout!" "No need now for any further
poems!" "A Banzai for peace!" "He can speak to us all!"
And "Great, man!" "Impressive!" "Something new for you,
Ken!" "Astounding!" "A real
Epic!" "The worst poem I have ever read!" "Abominably
tasteless!" "Too funny!" "Dead, man!
A cop-out! a real white man's poem! a folderol of honky
blank spitzenburger smugglerout Caucasian gyp
Of phony bourgeois peace poetry, a total shrig!" "Terrific!"
"I will expect you at six!"
"A lovely starry catalogue for peace!" "Is it Shakespeare or
Byron who breathes
In the lines of his poem?" "You have given us the Pleasures
of Peace,
Now where is the real thing?" "Koch has studied his history!"
"Bold!" "Stunning!" "It touches us like leaves
Sparkling in April—but is that all there is
To his peace plea?" Well, you be the one
To conclude it, if you think it needs more—I want to end it,
I want to see real Peace again! Oh peace bams!
I need your assistance—and peace drams, distilling through
the world! peace lamps, be shining! and peace lambs,
rumble up the shore!
O Goddess, sweet Muse, I'm stopping—now show us where
you are!

And the big boats come sailing into the harbor for peace
And the little apes are running around the jungle for peace
And the day (that is, the star of day, the sun) is shining for
peace
Somewhere a moustachioed student is puzzling over the
works of Raymond Roussel for peace
And the Mediterranean peach trees are fast asleep for peace
With their pink arms akimbo and the blue plums of
Switzerland for peace
And the monkeys are climbing for coconuts and peace
The Hawaiian palm
And serpents are writhing for peace—those are snakes—

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And the Alps, Mount Vesuvius, all the really big important mountains
Are rising for peace, and they're filled with rocks—surely it won't be long;
And Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* is moving across the monastery wall
A few micrometres for peace, and Paolo Ucello's red horses
Are turning a little redder for peace, and the Anglo-Saxon dining hall
Begins glowing like crazy, and Beowulf, Robert E. Lee, Sir Barbarossa, and Baron Jeep
Are sleeping on the railways for peace and darting around the harbor
And leaping into the sailboats and the sailboats will go on
And underneath the sailboats the sea will go on and we will go on
And the birds will go on and the snappy words will go on
And the tea sky and the sloped marine sky
And the hustle of beans will go on and the unserious canoe
It will all be going on in connection with you, peace, and my poem, like a Cadillac of wampum
Unredeemed and flying madly, will go exploding through
New cities sweet inflated, planispheres, ingenious hair, a camera smashing
Badinage, cerebral stands of atmospheres, unequaled, dreamed of
Empeacements, candled piers, fumisteries, emphatic moods, terrestialism's
Crackle, love's flat, sun's sweets, oh peace, to you.

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Alice

Donald Barthelme

twirling around on my piano stool my head begins to swim my head begins to swim twirling around on my piano stool twirling around on my piano stool a dizzy spell eventuates twirling around on my piano stool I begin to feel dizzy twirling around on my piano stool

I want to fornicate with Alice but my wife Regine would be insulted Alice's husband Buck would be insulted my child Hans would be insulted my answering service would be insulted tingle of insult running through this calm loving healthy productive tightly-knit

the hinder portion scalding-house good eating Curve B in addition to the usual baths and ablutions military police sumptuousness of the washhouse risking misstatements kept distances iris to iris queen of holes damp, hairy legs note of anger chanting and shouting konk sense of "mold" on the "muff" sense of "talk" on the "surface" konk² all sorts of chemical girl who delivered the letter give it a bone plummy bare legs saturated in every belief and ignorance rational living private client bad bosom uncertain workmen mutton-tugger obedience to the rules of the logical system Lord Muck hot tears harmonica rascal

can you produce chaos? Alice asked certainly I can produce chaos I said I produced chaos she regarded the chaos chaos is handsome and attractive she said and more durable than regret I said and more nourishing than regret she said

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I want to fornicate with Alice but it is a doomed project fornicating with Alice there are obstacles impediments preclusions estoppels I will exhaust them for you what a gas see cruel deprivements SECTION SEVEN moral ambiguities SECTION NINETEEN Alice's thighs are like SECTION TWENTY-ONE

I am an OB I obstetricate ladies from predicaments holding the bucket I carry a device connected by radio to my answering service bleeps when I am wanted can't even go to the films now for fear of bleeping during filmic highpoints can I in conscience *turn off* while fornicating with Alice?

Alice is married to Buck I am married to Regine Buck is my friend Regine is my wife regret is battologized in SECTIONS SIX THROUGH TWELVE and the actual intercourse intrudes somewhere in SECTION FORTY-THREE

I maintain an air of serenity which is spurious I manage this by limping my limp artful creation not an abject limp (Quasimodo) but a proud limp (Byron) I move slowly solemnly through the world miming a stiff leg this enables me to endure the gaze of strangers the hatred of pediatricians

we discuss discuss and discuss important considerations swarm and dither

for example in what house can I fornicate with Alice? in my house with Hans pounding on the bedroom door in her house with Buck shedding his sheepskin coat in the kitchen in some temporary rented house what joy

can Alice fornicate without her Malachi record playing? will Buck miss the Malachi record which Alice will have taken to the rented house? will Buck kneel before the rows and rows of records in his own house running a finger along the spines looking for the Malachi record? poignant poignant

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can Buck the honest architect with his acres of projects his mobs of draughtsmen the alarm bell which goes off in his office whenever the government decides to renovate a few blocks of blight can Buck object if I decide to renovate Alice?

and what of the boil on my ass the right buttock can I lounge in the bed in the rented house in such a way that Alice will not see will not start away from in fear terror revulsion

and what of rugs should I rug the rented house and what of cups what of leaning on an elbow in the Hertz Rent-All bed having fornicated with Alice and desiring a cup of black and what of the soap powder dish towels such a cup implies and what of a decent respect for the opinions of mankind and what of the hammer throw

I was a heavy man with the hammer once should there be a spare hammer for spare moments?

Alice's thighs are like great golden varnished wooden oars I assume I haven't seen them

chaos is tasty AND USEFUL TOO

colored clothes paper handkerchiefs super cartoons bit of fresh the Pope's mule inmission do such poor work together in various Poujadist manifestations deep-toned blacks waivers play to the gas Zentralbibliothek Zurich her bare ass with a Teddy bear blatty string kept in a state of suspended tension by a weight cut from the backs of alligators

you can do it too it's as easy as it looks

there is no game for that particular player white and violet over hedge and ditch clutching airbrush still single but wearing a ring the dry a better "feel" in use pretended to be doing it quite unconsciously fishes hammering long largish legs

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damp fine water dancer, strains of music, expenses of the flight Swiss emotion transparent thin alkaline and very slippery fluid danger for white rats little country telephone booths brut insults brought by mouth famous incidents

in bed regarding Alice's stomach it will be a handsome one I'm sure but will it not also resemble some others?

or would it be possible in the rented house to dispense with a bed to have only a mattress on the floor with all the values that attach to that or perhaps only a pair of blankets or perhaps only the skin of some slow-moving animal such as the slug the armadillo or perhaps only a pile of read newspapers

wise Alice tells you things you hadn't heard before in the world in Paris she recognizes the Ritz from the Babar books oh yes that's where the elephants stay

or would it be possible to use other people's houses at hours when these houses were empty would that be erotic? could love be made in doorways under hedges under the sprinting chestnut tree? can Alice forego her Malachi record so that Buck kneeling before the rows of records in his empty deserted abandoned and pace-setting house fingering the galore of spines there would *find* the Malachi record with little peeps of gree peeps of gree good for Buck!

shit

Magritte

what is good about Alice is first she likes chaos what is good about Alice is second she is a friend of Tom

SECTION NINETEEN TOM plaster thrashing gumbo of explanations grease on the Tinguely new plays sentimental songs sudden torrential rains carbon projects evidence of eroticism conflict between zones skin, ambiguous movements baked on the blue table 3 mm. a stone had broken my wind-

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shield hurricane damage impulsive behavior knees folded back lines on his tongue with a Magic Marker gape orange tips ligamenta lata old men buried upright delights of everyone's life uninteresting variations pygmy owl assume the quadrupedal position in which the intestines sink forward measurement of kegs other sciences megapod nursemaid said very studied, hostile things she had long been saving up breakfast dream wonderful loftiness trank red clover uterine spasms guided by reason black envelopes highly esteemed archers wet leg critical menials making gestures chocolate ice pink and green marble weight of the shoes I was howling in the kitchen Tom was howling in the hall white and violet over hedge and ditch clutching oolfoo quiet street suburban in flavor quiet crowd only slightly restive as reports of the letters from Japan circulate

I am whispering to my child Hans my child Hans is whispering to me Hans whispers that I am faced with a problem in ethics the systems of the axiologicalists he whispers the systems of the deontologicalists but I am not privy to these systems I whisper try the New School he whispers the small device in my coat pocket goes bleep!

nights of ethics at the New School

is this "middle life"? can I hurry on to "old age"? I see Alice walking away from me carrying an A & P shopping bag the shopping bag is full of haunting melodies grid coordinates great expectations French ticklers magic marks

nights of ethics at the New School "good" and "bad" as terms with only an emotive meaning I like the Walrus best Alice whispered he ate more than the Carpenter though the instructor whispered then I like the Carpenter best Alice whispered but he ate as many as he could get the instructor whispered

yellow brick wall visible from rear bedroom window of the rented house

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I see Alice walking away from me carrying a Primary Structure

MOVEMENT OF ALICE'S ZIPPER located at the rear of Alice's dress running from the neckhole to the bumhole yes I know that the first is an attribute of the dress the second an attribute of the girl but I have located it for you in some rough way the zipper you could find it in the dark

a few crones are standing about next to them are some louts the crones and louts are talking about the movement of Alice's zipper

rap Alice on the rump standing in the rented bedroom I have a roller and a bucket of white paint requires a second coat perhaps a third who knows a fourth and fifth I sit on the floor next to the paint bucket regarding the yellow brick wall visible there a subway token on the floor I pick it up drop it into the paint bucket slow circles on the surface of the white paint

insurance?

confess that for many years I myself took no other measures, followed obediently in the footsteps of my teachers, copied the procedures I observed painted animals, frisky inventions, thwarted patrons, most great hospitals and clinics, gray gauzes transparent plastic containers Presidential dining room about 45 cm. coquetry and flirtation knit games beautiful tension beaten metal catch-penny devices impersonal panic Klinger's nude in tree tickling nose of bear with long branch or wand unbutton his boots fairly broad duct, highly elastic walls peerless piece "racing" Dr. Haacke has poppy-show pulled me down on the bed and started two ceiling-high trees astonishing and little-known remark of Balzac's welter this field of honor financial difficulties what sort of figure did these men cut?

Alice's husband Buck calls me will I gather with him for a game of golf? I accept but on the shoe shelf I cannot find the

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correct shoes distractedness stupidity weak memory! I am boring myself what should the punishment be I am forbidden to pick my nose forevermore

Buck is rushing toward me carrying pieces of carbon paper big as bedsheets what is he hinting at? duplicity

bleep! it is the tipped uterus from Carson City calling

SECTION FORTY-THREE then I began chewing upon Alice's long and heavy breasts first one then the other the nipples brightened freshened then I turned her on her stomach and rubbed her back first slow then fast first the shoulders then the buttocks

possible attitudes found in books 1) I don't know what's happening to me 2) what does it mean? 3) seized with the deepest sadness, I know not why 4) I am lost, my head whirls, I know not where I am 5) I lose myself 6) I ask you, what have I come to? 7) I no longer know where I am, what is this country? 8) had I fallen from the skies, I could not be more giddy 9) a mixture of pleasure and confusion, that is my state 10) where am I, and when will this end? 11) what shall I do? I do not know where I am

but I do know where I am I am on West Eleventh Street shot with lust I speak to Alice on the street she is carrying a shopping bag I attempt to see what is in the shopping bag but she conceals it we turn to savor rising over the Women's House of Detention a particularly choice bit of "sisters" statistics on the longevity of life angelism straight as a loon's leg conceals her face behind *pneumatiques* hurled unopened scream the place down tuck mathematical models six hours in the confessional psychological comparisons scream the place down Mars yellow plights make micefeet of old cowboy airs cornflakes people pointing to the sea overboots nasal contact 7 cm. prune the audience dense car correctly identify chemical junk blooms of iron wonderful loftiness sentient populations

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Further Adventures

John Ashbery and James Schuyler

I

"It's hard to believe it wasn't built to look that way," Alice said, turning her back on the Forum. "Listen, Marshall, I want you to write to them about that furnace. I refuse to spend another winter like the last one."

"You don't seem to realize that what our tenants are complaining about is too much heat," Marshall said, wiping his brow as though in sympathy.

Around the corner of some crumbling brickwork Mrs Bridgewater appeared. "Have you seen Fabia and Guglielmo?" she asked. But her words were lost in the roar of traffic. Alice, however, had divined her question.

"They went that-a-way," she said, pointing towards a hill which was crowned with trees.

Marshall glanced briefly about him, then began scattering checkmarks broadcast through the pages of a guidebook.

"He seems a nice enough young man, don't you think, Alice?" Mrs Bridgewater asked.

"Oh, sure," Alice said. "Say, how about this afternoon for a nice cool catacomb?"

"He has a sister who's married to an American and lives in New Jersey," Mrs Bridgewater continued. "Elizabeth, I think he said. The town."

Marshall closed his guidebook with a snap. "According to *The Rome Daily American*, the heat is even worse there. Where do you suppose she's dragged Irving off to now?"

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"She has an insatiable appetite for *granite*. She claims there's a Southern recipe that's almost the same," Mrs Bridgewater said.

"Did you see the card Alice got from Victor?" Marshall asked.

Alice fished in her pocketbook and retrieved it. "After waiting in line for half an hour at American Express I was rewarded by *this*," she said.

Mrs Bridgewater took the card. The picture on the front showed a trailer camp in a pine woods. The message on the back read, "Saluti! Victor," and, "Bons baisers à toutes et à tous—Paul."

"How thoughtful," Mrs Bridgewater said.

"Shall we go and rescue Fabia from the Tarpeian Rock?" Alice asked Marshall. "Or are you *stanco*?"

"Look," Marshall said. In the midst of the onrushing traffic careened an open carriage in which sat Irving and his mother. Mrs Kelso looked as though she had just pulled the name "Boadicea" out of a hat and was determined to see the thing through.

In a moment Irving was alighting at their feet with unusual alacrity. "Hi, folks," he said. "This gentleman"—he indicated the driver—"has promised to give us a Cook's Tour of the city for twenty dollars, tip included. We get to see the site of the 1942 World's Fair and Ostia Antica, a ruined city—like Pompeii."

"*Ostia Antica, no*," the driver said, "*il Foro Italico, si*."

Irving scanned the exhaust-fumed horizon. "I don't see any sign of Fabia and that friendly native."

"We can't all fit in that," Mrs Bridgewater said. "Besides, half would have to ride backwards."

"I don't think you'd find that Cesare—that's the horse's name—moves fast enough for you to become car-sick," Mrs Kelso said. "He's quite sluggish, as a matter of fact."

"He's not the only one," Alice said.

"Would anyone like some grapes?" Mrs Kelso said. "Dr Bridgewater, I trust, is enjoying the Congress?"

"He seems to be having a high old time," Mrs Bridgewater

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said. "He has made some new acquaintances and renewed others." She lowered her voice. "I gather he finds the University of Padua of great antiquity in more than one sense. Of course he can't speak too openly on the phone."

Irving nodded. "Mother and I are keeping our fingers crossed until we get out of here," he said. "Actually we both had a touch of slight indigestion after we got back to the hotel last night. Just the usual tourist stuff."

Alice yawned and turned toward the view. In the sultry light, it was looking remarkably like a sepia reproduction of itself. "I think I see Fabia," she said, "and her cicisbeo." Marshall looked at her reproachfully.

Two figures waved briefly at them from a nearby rise, and then began rather carefully to descend it.

"According to this," Marshall held out his guidebook, "we are practically on top of the Golden House."

Alice evinced no interest. "Perhaps it was whisked away in the night," she said.

The driver of the carriage began simultaneously to mutter and to mop his brow. "I fear he's growing impatient," Irving said. "Though I did make a rather generous down payment. What is the Foro Italico, do you suppose?"

"It just rates a couple of lines of fine type in here," Marshall said.

"All I know," Alice said, "is that Abel Greeley puts it right up there with the Victor Emmanuel Monument and the Milan railway station."

"Everything else closed," the driver said. "*Chiuso*, closed."

"They vanished," Mrs Bridgewater was saying, as a not too commodious Simca drew up to the curb.

"Hop in, everybody," Fabia said. "Memmo is taking us to the Protestant Cemetery."

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II

"I am most happy to meet you," Baroness Oscari said. "Especially *you*," she added, turning toward Dr Bridgewater. "There have been doctors in my family ever since the Middle Ages."

"It is nice to be in a home again," Mrs Bridgewater said. She gazed about at the bleak modernity of a room which somehow suggested an upstairs crypt.

"I am only sorry that your son cannot be here," the Baroness said. "Fabia has told me so much about him. From her description, he sounds rather like my first-born, Orazio. He is living in Udine for the time being."

"I understand, Baroness," Dr Bridgewater said, "that you are a Bryn Mawr girl."

"Yes. The year I spent at Bryn Mawr was—well, if not the happiest, one of the most worthwhile. Have you any connections with Bryn Mawr?"

"No," Dr Bridgewater said. "None."

"I know for a fact," Mrs Bridgewater quickly added, "that it is held in very high esteem."

"Please come into the garden now, and meet my husband," the Baroness said. "I don't allow him to smoke his cigars in the house."

Dr Oscari was seated on a stone bench beside a small trickling fountain. He rose to his feet and advanced, smiling shyly. "He doesn't speak English," his wife explained.

Fabia greeted him with an affectionate, "*Buona sera, Dodo.*"

"Memmo has been telling me what wonderful tourists you are," the Baroness said. "Most Americans, when they come to Rome, want to see only the Forum and the Spanish Steps. You have seen parts of the city that many Romans never see."

Dr Bridgewater swelled a little. "I find standing here, in Parioli, just as interesting as standing in the Pantheon. The one is the world of today; the other, of yesterday."

Baroness Oscari looked at him with incredulity. After a long pause she said, "Well, there is no accounting for tastes."

Memmo took them on a tour of the garden: the two or-

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ange trees, the six oleanders and the vine. At one point something shot across the moist pebbles of the path, causing Mrs Bridgewater to scream. "Was that an eft?" she asked.

"Why yes," Memmo said, "it was."

Fabia picked a calendula and began to chew the stem. "I'll be sorry to leave this funny old city," she said.

"And how are you progressing with *I Promessi Sposi?*" the Baroness asked her.

"*Così così*," Fabia said. "Though for the life of me I can't see why it reminds Memmo of Proust."

"I understand," Dr Oscari said to her in Italian, "that you are fond of the work of Raphael Mengs."

"We find we have many tastes in common," Memmo said. "Today it was Canova's sculpture of Pauline Borghese—'*La Paolina.*'"

"Unfortunately, our stay in Rome will be over all too soon," Dr Bridgewater said. "We must push on to Naples, and then to Calabria."

"Maybe you will take me along to protect you from bandits," Memmo said. "Bang! Bang!"

His mother frowned. "Calabria is not Sicily," she said. Turning to Mrs Bridgewater, she continued, "My husband has cousins there, distant cousins. Their lands are vast, but they are not rich." She paused and added, "There is, of course, nothing to eat or drink."

Dr Oscari flicked his cigar ash into a tub of snapdragons. "Hillbillies," he said in English. He turned to Fabia and spoke to her at some length in Italian. When he had finished, his wife translated succinctly. "He says when she has finished Manzoni, she will be ready for d'Annunzio. It is d'Annunzio who, he considers, has, after Dante, most richly explored the resources of our language. Especially in *La Figlia di Jorio*."

Memmo made a face. "Myself, I prefer Sannazaro."

"While I," the Baroness added, "would recommend the novels of Matilde Serao."

Dr and Mrs Bridgewater kept their peace.

"How is Mrs Kelso?" Memmo asked.

"Not too well," Mrs Bridgewater said with a little cough,

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indicating that the illness was one which would not bear much discussion.

"I am sorry to hear it," the Baroness said. "If there is anything my husband can do—"

"Eno's Fruit Salts," interjected the latter, again in English.

III

"I think I've found it," Victor said excitedly, as he stuck his head out from under a stripped-down chassis. "It's this doohicky here."

Paul looked at the ominous sky and at a nearby road sign which read, "Aix-les-Bains 71 Km." He said nothing.

Victor got to his feet and gazed about him in growing alarm. Aside from a distant pine, the maquis—if such it was—seemed all that the books had promised. But as his face darkened, Paul's grew bright: over a distant crest appeared something rather like a woodlouse. After a considerable time, a Volkswagen approached and stopped on the other side of the road. A pretty seventeen-year-old girl with blond hair leaned out of the window. "Is this the way to Culoz?" she asked.

"Could be," Victor said. "How about lending us a hairpin so we can fix this darn thing?"

"No," Paul said, "you are well out of your path...unless Culoz has moved bag and baggage to the Pyrenees."

"What seems to be the matter with your car?" the girl asked, glancing briefly at her reflection in the rear-view mirror.

"We don't use hairpins," her companion said. "You're an American," she said accusingly to Victor.

"We could give you a lift to the nearest garage," the first girl said. "Unless you're going to Culoz. I'm Madge Parkinson, and this is my friend, Dottie Siegel."

After some hopping in and out, and lashing of baggage to the roof, they were hurtling on their way, neck and neck with the gathering storm. "We've done the Loire," Dottie Siegel explained. "Now we're off to a seminar at Salzburg."

"Why are you going to Culoz?" Victor asked.

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"Partly to see a brother, but mostly to see the lake about which Lamartine wrote his poem," Madge said. "We're told it's near by."

"My mother would be interested in that," Victor said. "Anyway I think that's the one."

"I'm not much on poetry," Paul confessed, "but I think the lake you mean is Bourget Lake. Culoz is nowhere near it." His head hit the roof as the car went over a thank-you-ma'am.

"These things get you there," Madge said with a laugh, "but not necessarily in one piece."

Paul rubbed his head acquiescingly. "I think we should stop at a roadside café, if we come to one. These roads can sometimes turn to raging torrents during a storm."

"It's hard to imagine who they would cater to around here," Dottie said.

A small huddled town came into view. When they reached it, all windows were shuttered, and the only sign of life was a cur, which hurled itself against the car with a hideous thud.

"Someone's pet, no doubt," Madge said. She flicked on the radio. A fast-moving accordion polka soon revived their spirits.

Paul sang along for a few bars, then translated. "It tells about a girl—a woman—who waits on the mole for her sailor. When he comes back, first she is going to beat him up, then she is going to show him a good time."

"Well—does she?" Dottie asked.

Paul shrugged. "It is of no importance. The entertainment lies in the low-class argot of her expressions."

A flash of lightning galvanized their attention on a police truck blocking the road ahead. As they approached it, a rubber-clad policeman with a lantern signaled them to stop. He came over to the car.

"The bridge ahead is washed out," he said. "You'll have to turn back, toward Culoz—unless you want to try the Hôtel des Voyageurs, about a quarter of a mile back. It's very comfortable."

Without consulting her companions, Madge made a sharp U-turn. They soon drew up before an inauspicious looking

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hostelry. A mustachioed man, wearing a blue vest and a beret pulled down over his head, came rushing out to take their bags.

"Everyone wants to stay here when it rains," he said amiably. "When the sun shines, everyone passes by." Inside, he set down the bags and gave Madge a little bow. "I am the *patron*, Alfred Duclos. Did you wish double or single beds? I can give you a room with three singles, and another with one double. In the event of a benighted traveler, however, I will have to allow him the third single bed. Perhaps, therefore, the two men would prefer the room with the three beds?"

"Suppose it's a woman," Dottie said.

"Or a couple," Paul added.

"In that case, some other arrangement would be necessary," M Duclos replied.

A thunder-clap rent the air. In the silence that followed, the travelers took in the room in which they stood, its simplicity relieved only by a large photograph of Léon Blum.

M Duclos gestured toward a row of hoary aperitif bottles on a small stand. "Perhaps," he said, "the ladies would like a Picon..." He was cut short by what seemed to be a ball of fire, which roared down the chimney and shot out into the room. The thing vanished as swiftly as it had come, and left behind a strong smell of singed hair. Rain began to fall in torrents and some tiles were heard shattering in the road without.

"It's really too sultry for Picon," Madge said, "but a pastis would be fine."

At the others' request, M Duclos produced four glasses of Pastis 51, after which he meditatively poured himself a glass of pale yellow Suze. Dottie extracted a box of diet wafers from a wicker hamper and doled out two for Madge and three for herself. "I'm sure *you* will want something more fortifying," she said as she put the box away. And indeed, Paul was soon calling for bread, cheese and anchovies.

Mme Duclos, a short dark woman of uncertain age, appeared in a doorway. "There is some cold roast lamb," she

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said, "and I could fix a cheese omelet. For dessert, cheese, and *reines-claude*."

"What's that?" Madge asked.

"It's like a sour green plum," Paul said.

Mme Duclos disappeared, and returned with a large Coca-Cola bottle filled with red wine.

Madge said, as she helped herself to a full glass of same, "I couldn't eat another bite."

"How many guests do you have at the moment?" Victor asked, as Mme Duclos again emerged from the kitchen, this time bearing a cold joint.

Two men came in. Both were dressed in black, soaking wet and cursing loudly and at length. Paul smiled appreciatively. "Here in the South," he explained, "swearing is something of a fine art."

"Those two are college professors from Pau," Mme Duclos said, as the men were heard tramping up the stairs. "We only have two other pensioners—the Misses Tosti, from Paris."

Before Victor could ask the question that leapt to his lips, Claire and Nadia came down the stairs. They were dressed in Austrian walking outfits and singing the 'Swing Duet' from *Véronique*. The sight of Victor halted them in mid-trill. Just at that moment, another thunderbolt erupted from the chimney, plunging the hotel in darkness. And there we must leave them for awhile.

IV

Mrs Bridgewater averted her gaze from the flotsam, then looked hastily back, lest she step off the quay and into it. "What I can't get used to," she said, "is the idea of all those Normans way down here." Nearby, some men were chasing a dog, in hopes of hitting it with a paddle.

"Yes, and what about the Greeks?" Mrs Kelso said. She resumed sucking *granita di limone* from a small paper cup.

"They say that in the interior of the island," Mrs Bridge-

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water went on, "one often sees blue-eyed men with red hair: the descendants of the Normans." Her tone was that of someone for whom history has begun to make sense.

"How odd—I didn't know that the Normans had red hair," Mrs Kelso said. "Though I guess I wouldn't recognize one if I tripped over him," she added with a laugh. "Mr Kelso's grandfather was once the consul here; but I'm afraid he was not well liked. The Scotch was very strong in him. He used to speak bitterly about the bribery, nepotism and general unsanitary conditions. Or so I'm told."

"I've always heard the Sicilians were a very clean people when given a chance," Alice said, with a wink at Memmo.

"They are very short," Memmo said. "It is the Arab blood. Sometimes it makes them sour, moody, and passionate."

Mrs Bridgewater, who disapproved of all three of these qualities, in that order, decided to let the conversation die. It seemed as though they had walked a long distance from their hotel. The late afternoon shadows had begun to lengthen, but the Concha d'Oro looked no more golden than usual.

"Does anyone have any idea where we are?" Alice pouted. "Maybe those soldiers over there could tell us."

"I know exactly where we are," Mrs Kelso said.

"Are you Americans?" one of the soldiers asked Alice. "My uncle lives in Cleveland."

"How interesting," Mrs Kelso said. "I once spent the summer there—well, Shaker Heights. In what part of Cleveland does your uncle live?"

"Euclid Avenue." He turned to Alice. "What state are you from?"

"You know, Di," Mrs Kelso said in an undertone, "Euclid Avenue is the longest street in the world."

"New York," Alice said. "The state—not the city."

"When I finish my military service," the soldier said, "I will go to America and work in my uncle's restaurant. Not my uncle in Cleveland, my uncle in New York."

"What does your uncle in Cleveland do?" Alice asked.

"He has a restaurant: the Luna Gardens. It is very well known."

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"Is this lady your sister?" another soldier asked, jerking his thumb in the direction of Fabia.

"No," Mrs Bridgewater said. "This is my daughter. We also have another child, a boy, though he is quite grown now. He is in France."

"You are French?" the second soldier asked.

"Ah, *Francia*," the first soldier smiled. He chuckled. "My name is Giorgio Grossblatt. From Trento. This is my friend Epifanio—Epifanio Montemezzi."

"From Pozzuoli."

"Isn't Sophia Loren from Pozzuoli?" Fabia asked.

"You bet," Epifanio said. "We are all crazy about her." He winked at Memmo, who was standing somewhat apart.

The third soldier, who had been looking a bit suspiciously at the Americans, now joined the group. "What kind of car do you drive?" he asked Mrs Kelso.

"A Studebaker—though for years we always had a Dodge."

"What time did you say you made the reservations for, Memmo?" Mrs Bridgewater asked.

"Ten-thirty," Fabia intervened. "The whole point is to eat in the garden, but the guidebook says you aren't safe from the bugs until after dark."

"What restaurant is that?" the third soldier asked.

"The Villa Igeia," Memmo said. "Have you been there?"

"Often," was the reply.

"Would you say that it is the best restaurant in Palermo?" Mrs Bridgewater asked.

"The best, no. The most expensive, yes."

"Roberto is a millionaire," Epifanio explained to Mrs Bridgewater in a kindly way.

"Which would you say *is* the best restaurant here?" Mrs Kelso asked.

"There is none," Roberto said.

Mrs Bridgewater's uneasiness crystallized in a manner not unfamiliar to her family. "Would you care to join us for an aperitif?" she asked.

Despite the vagaries of Mrs Kelso's bump of locality, they were soon seated at a sidewalk table on the Via Cavour.

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"It's just like Ives' Fourth," Alice said to Fabia, but her remark was lost in the din.

"If your stomach is feeling uneasy," Roberto said to Alice, with a sudden air of savoir-faire, "I recommend the Rabarbaro Zucca. It's made of rhubarb, and tastes like medicine."

"No thanks," Alice said. "I don't want anything stronger than a Bellini."

A flurry among the further tables caused many to rise to their feet. After a while, a donkey, festooned with feathers and pulling a gaily painted cart, trotted by.

"*Giorno di festa*," explained Giorgio. "A holiday."

"Which one?" Mrs Kelso asked.

"Not an important one," Roberto said. "In Italy, anything that is thought nice is called, *giorno di festa*." He sent a penetrating look in the direction of the nearest waiter, who said, "*Subito*," and vanished. Roberto turned back to Fabia. "Now I must ask you something. What do you think of the Italian men?"

Alice snorted and began to wave. A waiter came and took their order.

"Actually I haven't met enough of them to know," Fabia said with a studied grace. "However, the ones I have met, I've liked."

"In America," Mrs Kelso said in an unmistakable tone, "the problems of the *mezzogiorno* are a cause of grave concern." She apparently expected a comment from Roberto, but none was forthcoming, though their drinks were.

Alice sipped her Rabarbaro Zucca and began to choke violently. The others stared at her anxiously. When she had caught her breath and wiped her eyes, they did not—as some had anticipated—reap the whirlwind.

"Needs must when the devil drives," Alice said, and ordered another with a glass of San Pellegrino on the side.

Mrs Bridgewater, who was gazing about her, suddenly gave a start. "Fabia!" she said. "That boy over there—the one in shorts—doesn't he look just like Victor?"

"Since the woman on his arm is Nadia Tosti," Fabia said, "I don't find the resemblance all that surprising."

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"Shall we ask them to join us?" Memmo said, in a bewildered but willing tone.

Before they do so, however, let us move back several weeks in time, and a good many kilometers to the north, to the Hôtel des Voyageurs.

V

After an acetylene lamp was brought and the surprise and the introductions were over, a bottle of local wine was broached (the *patron* having silently removed the Coca-Cola bottle on Claire's appearing). A small silence fell—or as much of one as the weather permitted.

Madge was the first to break it. "That was very pretty—what you were singing," she said. "I wish you'd sing it all the way through, from beginning to end."

"Only this time I will take the man's part," Paul said, "and 'push'."

This bit of innuendo caused Claire to say, "Your mother and the doctor, Victor: how do they sustain the fatigues of travel?"

Victor pondered this question for some moments before replying. "I guess it's traveling with friends," he said. "It's not so tiring when other people around you are tired."

"It must be wonderful to travel in France *and* be French," Dottie said. "I'm constantly torn between some cathedral and something a little more recherché."

"Yes, we often find little out-of-the way places," Nadia said with a good-natured laugh, "such as this."

Claire winced as some more tiles came clattering down into the courtyard outside. "But *you*—how did you ever find it?"

When Paul had told them, not without exaggeration and some Gallic gestures, his face settled into a worried frown. "Boy, that car—I don't know what's going to happen."

"Don't worry," said one of the two teachers from Pau, who had returned to the bar and had for some time been trying unsuccessfully to join in the conversation. "These country

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roads can turn into torrents overnight. Your car is probably at the bottom of the Rhone River by now."

"Yes," Madge said, "once again it's the Volkswagen *über alles*." She drained her glass and, turning to Victor, said, "Would you do the honors?"

"*Mais certainement*," replied Victor, whose cheeks were beginning to glow. "Another bottle of your pinard, Monsieur Duclos, *s'il vous plaît*—'with beaded bubbles winking at the brim.'"

"That's Keats, isn't it," the other teacher said. "I didn't know Americans read Keats. I'm very fond of Dashiell Hammett," he added quickly. Finding his overtures were not rebuffed, he continued. "I am Etienne Gilot, and this is my colleague, Marc Ducasse."

"Any relation to Isidor—the second most famous *palois* of them all?" Victor asked, with the air of one who has the ball and is running with it. Nadia gasped in admiration.

"I am reminded," Claire said, "of that villa outside Florence, the one Boccaccio made the scene of his Decameron. Though in this instance, it is the rain that plagues us."

"That gives me an idea," Etienne said. "Why don't we try to stave off boredom by telling each other stories? But I warn you, I know a few racy ones."

"I," Nadia said, "am not unreminded of 'The Masque of the Red Death.'"

M Duclos returned and raised his eyes despairingly to the ceiling. "I couldn't find you any wine—the cellar's flooded. But I've brought you a bottle of my homemade digestif."

He poured a small amount into a glass and offered it to Marc Ducasse, who accepted it warily. When he had sipped it, rolled it in his mouth and swallowed it, he said, "My good man, here you have cause for future fame and fortune."

Mme Duclos nodded knowingly. "He could have sold the formula ten times over," she said. "The Fernet-Branca people have been pestering him for it for years. But he likes to keep it for himself and a few cronies."

Claire gazed questioningly at the inky liquid in her glass. "What is its base?" she asked.

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"Galoshes, I *think*," Dottie murmured. This aside was not lost on M Duclos, who looked at her in an injured manner but said nothing.

The door opened to admit a figure in streaming black rubber. The room was briefly but thoroughly lashed by the tempest. "The road has become a torrent," the new arrival announced.

"Good evening, *M l'agent*," the proprietress said officiously. "What can I get you? A little glass of digestif, perhaps?"

"No, I have to work," was the glum reply.

"You have been wondering how it is that you find us *here*," Claire said to Victor. She spoke as one who has glanced into *Roberts' Rules of Order* and now takes up the gavel.

"No I haven't," Victor said.

Claire smiled at him benignly and went on. "My sister—Nadia—is nearing the end of a long search. One of her clients—a wealthy American who, as you say, prefers to remain anonymous—has for a long time sought to locate a missing work—a sculpture of Hiram Powers. We have good reason to think that right now it is gathering dust somewhere in the environs of Culoz."

The gendarme eyed her narrowly. "What does this statue represent?" he asked.

"The goddess Demeter, with her daughter Proserpine kneeling before her and holding a sheaf of bachelor-buttons in her outstretched arms."

The policeman nodded. "I think I know that work," he said. "It stands in the Cours Lamartine, at Annemasse. There has been a campaign in the press lately to have it removed."

"You have been most helpful," Nadia said. When the policeman turned to speak with the *patron*, she said in a lower voice, "I am well acquainted with the work of which he speaks. It represents the people of the Ile Bourbon—as it was then called—offering tribute to the mother country—or some such. It is by a minor follower of Barye and not even a sledge hammer could reduce it to viable fragments."

"Well, you have to give him A for Effort," Victor said.

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"But seriously, Nadia, do you have any idea where the statue really is?"

The policeman, after downing (on second thought) a large glass of rum at the bar, returned to their table. "My good friends," he said, pressing his fingertips together, "you must be prepared to evacuate this place, should it become necessary. The whole mountain might land on us at any moment."

As he stopped speaking, Madge was heard murmuring to Paul, "Would you mind pouring me another glass of that moustache straightener?"

VI

Victor admired Nadia for wanting to go to Annemasse anyway, to "check out the statue," as she put it. Late the following day, having survived the perils of the Hôtel des Voyageurs, a group of four young people was seen alighting from a mud-spattered Peugeot in the Cours Lamartine. The storm of the previous day had broken summer's back, and some chill air was leaking down from the none-too-distant mountains. A dank smell arose from the ground and the pollarded catalpas seemed to gesticulate vehemently in the twilight.

Claire glanced skeptically at the stubby trunks. "You will recall," she said, "how Stendhal inveighed against such treatment of trees. He seemed to think it exclusively a French vice —but then, he, too, suffered from *l'anglomanie*."

"As a film," Paul said, "I prefer *The Charterhouse*."

They stopped before a statue that seemed to represent a giant pineapple over whose surface tiny figures climbed. "You see? I was right," Nadia said despairingly.

"It seems to have been carved out of marl," Paul suggested.

"We can't give up this easily," Victor said, with grim determination. Taking Nadia's arm, he hustled them further along the Cours. They soon came to yet another statue: the poet Lamartine himself, surrounded by the creatures of his imagination. His favorite of these seemed to be an impish

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peasant girl, whom the Tosti sisters identified as Graziella.

"The flowers are nice," Victor said, indicating the wheel of yellow cannas from which the monument rose. As they were returning to the car, Victor vanished toward a *châlet de nécessité* that sat in a nearby clump of rhododendrons. He reappeared almost immediately, too excited for speech but gasping and pointing in the direction from whence he came. Without a word, he turned and retraced his steps, the others following in silent haste. There, within the clump and turned toward the wall, was an unmistakable, if somewhat weather-stained, Hiram Powers.

For once, even Claire lost her cool. "Good grief!" she exclaimed.

Victor was radiant, and Nadia seemed not unwilling to divide her attention between the object of her long hunt and its finder. However, she contented herself with saying, "This must be looked into."

The following day—after a visit to the *Syndicat d'Initiative*—she rejoined the others, who, having returned to the scene of their triumph, were seated around a table outside a little thatched bungalow in the Cours Lamartine. All hung upon her words, of which, to make a long story short, the burden was as follows.

For many years Demeter and her daughter had stood in the entrance hall of a Gothicized chateau outside the town, which, passing through various hands, eventually came into those of an austere maiden lady. The maiden, or rather, the lady, finding so many and such evident breasts unworthy of the kinship she claimed to General Boulanger, had offered it forthwith to the town fathers on extended loan. She, her kin—even the chateau had passed from the scene long since, and the present town fathers were only too anxious to disembarrass themselves of a work that gave rise to many a schoolboy ribaldry. The campaign for its removal, initiated by the local Communist paper, soon gained numerous adherents of every political stripe, and had successfully progressed as far as the rhododendrons, when the town was riven by the question of what work was to replace it. At the moment, the leading contenders were

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a concrete dove, symbolizing peace, and an abstraction of St Francis de Sales. And it was further rumored that in far-off Paris a thunderbolt was being readied.

"In other words," Nadia said, "the Hiram Powers is up for grabs."

How the controversial work of art was finally removed from Annemasse under cover of night, and, after many difficulties, crated and shipped to the United States, need not concern our readers. Suffice it to say that it eventually found its way to a grape arbor on a Long Island estate where it stands to this day.

The next morning, after a night spent mastering the fundamentals of the maxixe, found Victor at the wheel of the Peugeot with Nadia seated beside him, as the little band set out for Geneva and the Place du Molard. Claire had suggested a visit to Ferney, and in a flash the others agreed. But as luck would have it, a telegram was waiting for Paul at the hotel, summoning him a week early to Monza. And so, after a hasty fondue and a stroll past the house where Calvin had lived, they again sped on their way, slowing up a bit only at Chillon.

Perhaps it was the local white wine, perhaps it was the nuptial connotations of the Alps, but Victor and Nadia abruptly found themselves living in a state of what Victor called "sin." Let it be quickly added in his defense that he thought of this condition as a necessary prelude to the altar, nor did the French girl require much cajoling.

VII

"What isn't clear to me," Mrs Bridgewater said, "is who this Madge and Dottie are, and where they figure in it."

"Yes," Dr Bridgewater agreed, "that is one of the things that's none too clear."

Victor smiled patiently. "I told you before, they picked us up in the south of France. Just before a storm. They probably saved our lives," he added.

Dr Bridgewater's face assumed an expression usually reserved for the AMA. "I wonder if you are aware of what it costs

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—in money—to maintain a family these days? Take an apartment in New York for example, quite a small apartment..."

"I was coming to that," Victor said. "Nadia isn't sure she'd feel happy living in America. In fact, she'd rather live in Paris."

Mrs Bridgewater drifted over to the window, and stood gazing at the sunlit Mediterranean. Reacting to this as though it were his cue, Dr Bridgewater asked in sepulchral tones, "And what would you do in Paris?"

"I was coming to that," Victor chuckled. "Nadia has a friend who works on the desk at the Herald Tribune there. She thinks he could get me a job rewriting, at least until I learn the antique business."

The incredulity with which this was received caused Victor to continue. "Anyway, that's not our long range plan."

"What is your long range plan, dear?" Mrs Bridgewater encouraged.

Victor frowned as he marshaled his thoughts. "Well," he said, "Europeans are crazy about American antiques. Claire is fed up with the perfume game, but she doesn't like to give up the travel. So the scheme is this. We'll open an American antique shop in Paris. Claire will do the buying."

"I have heard of bringing coals to Newcastle," Dr Bridgewater said, "but this takes the cake."

Mrs Bridgewater suddenly wheeled around and smiled at them coquettishly. "Well, Father," she said, "you know we always said we wouldn't stand in their way when the time came, and I guess it has. Besides, she must be a pretty smart girl if that story about the Hiram Powers is true."

A brief rat-a-tat at the door preceded the entrance of a cheerful Fabia. She was dressed in various shades of lemon and sported an enormous pair of sunglasses. "Is Victor still on the coals?" she asked. "Or can he be taken off long enough so we won't miss the trip to Cefalù?"

"There are times, Fabia," Dr Bridgewater said, "when I wonder where my children got their sense of humor from. Certainly not from your mother or me."

Fabia pouted. "Are you including Victor in that? Mrs Kelso

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doesn't seem to think I'm so bad. She just called me her sunshine girl."

Mrs Bridgewater laughed. "You mustn't mind," she said. "Mildred just says the first thing that pops into her head."

"Oh I don't mind that," Fabia said. "In fact, it's one of her nicer qualities. But I didn't come here to discuss Mrs Kelso, I came to get the low-down on Victor. Are he and Nadia getting spliced, or are they not?"

"That's about the size of it," Victor said.

His father began to heave in his chair, but Mrs Bridgewater intervened. "It's nothing that won't keep," she said. "I thought Alice would be with you."

Fabia shrugged. "I guess she's wandered off in the direction of the barracks again."

"Oh," Mrs Bridgewater said quietly. "I hope she won't do anything rash."

"Alice never does anything rash. She just gives that impression," Victor said with his new-found assurance. "Anyway, she's gone to Monreale with Nadia. There's an old man up there who makes some kind of special straw hats to order. I'm sure glad they hit it off so well." His tone was one of simple relief.

"Are they getting them to wear?" Fabia asked. "Or are they planning to stuff a boutique with them?"

"Aw, can it, Sis," Victor scowled.

Fabia continued to parade up and down in the tiny *salotto*. "I never thought I'd have Claire Tosti for an in-law," she said. "I guess there are worse things, though off hand I can't think of any."

"I wouldn't tempt fate if I were you," Victor said, in a surprisingly malicious tone.

"You're already getting to be quite French, aren't you," Fabia said.

"Now children," Mrs Bridgewater said. She began dabbing at her cheeks with a small lace handkerchief. At that moment the door opened and Memmo entered, resplendent in a pale pongee suit. "All aboard!" he called. "The Cefalù choo-choo is leaving on track twenty-nine."

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Mrs Bridgewater surveyed her hankie. "Is this large enough, Fabia? To drop on my head, for the churches?"

"All that is asked," Dr Bridgewater said, "is a gesture. Well, are we waiting for Mildred Kelso?"

Memmo laughed. "Not at all," he said. "She is already in the car, and not unmindful of the passing time."

VIII

"I don't know quite what I expected of *Favorita*," Alice said, "but it certainly wasn't palm trees and yuccas."

"Me too," Fabia chimed in, after yawning. "I guess I was expecting—well, something like nineteenth century Paris. The gaslit era."

"It is true," Giorgio Grossblatt said. "Sicily is not cozy—it is not gemütlich. In fact, Italy is not gemütlich. Except in the Trento area, and some other parts of the north."

"I'm glad Italy isn't gemütlich," Alice said. "I don't think I could stand it if it was."

Ever since lunch, Roberto had appeared plunged in a stupor. He now came to long enough to say, "Sicily is a hostile land. It is also a garden."

"And a dump," Giorgio said.

"Oh, it's OK," Alice said, glancing about at the arid hills through which they sped. "Say—isn't it too bad about Memmo getting that urgent call back to Rome. I mean, he was the one who *wanted* to go to Segesta."

Fabia looked mysterious and restive.

"Segesta!" Roberto said. "No self-respecting Italian would dare miss it—it is Sicily's Leaning Tower of Pisa. In fact, why don't we make a detour, a kind of *viaggio sorpresa?* It is the hill towns that are most typically characteristic."

The girls glanced apprehensively toward the heights, and Alice said, "I don't feel up to a tussle with Salvatore Giuliano this afternoon. Anyway, we have to be back at five—Fabia's expecting a phone call."

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"From Rome?" Roberto asked. "We could not possibly get back from Segesta by five." He turned onto a secondary road which sloped steeply upward, where they soon encountered a herd of goats.

"The owner is swearing at me," Roberto said as he ploughed through the flock, causing a certain amount of caprine hysteria, "but I can't understand him. He's speaking in Sicilian dialect."

Their merriment, if such it was, abruptly ceased. Beyond the next curve, the road wound on in a series of dramatic S's, skirting what appeared to be The Abyss.

"Well," Giorgio said, "we can't go back—and I certainly hate like hell to go on."

But Roberto had already recovered his aplomb. "Don't worry," he said. "I am a professional racing-car driver. I have driven in the *Mille Miglie*, and at Monza." With that, he stepped on the accelerator and sent the car hurtling forward in a manner reminiscent of the late Barney Oldfield.

A couple of thrilling kilometers later they came within sight of some hovels, partly surrounded by a dilapidated wall. Roberto slowed down. The engine gave a brief summary of Elektra's dance of triumph and, like Elektra, died.

A deep silence ensued. Fabia glanced nervously at the nearest hovel, whose façade bore the tattered remnants of an advertisement for Pirelli tires. "Do you suppose that's a garage?" she asked Roberto in a half-whisper.

"Possibly," he said. But he showed no inclination to get out and investigate. Meanwhile the distant, faintly vengeful bleating of goats became audible.

"I think someone should go knock on that door," Alice said. Before anyone could do so, it opened of its own accord and a very old lady dressed in black emerged. At the sight of our friends she threw up her hands in dismay and withdrew into the house, slamming and locking the door behind her.

After a reproachful silence, Giorgio said, "I guess this will take some looking into." He gave a little cough and added, "Don't you think so, Roberto?"

"And the sooner the better," Alice said.

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A military truck, bristling with what Alice was later to describe as state troopers, approached the stranded vehicle and ground to a halt. The driver peered curiously at Roberto. "It's against the law to stop here," he said. There followed ten minutes of loud and lively give-and-take, at the end of which the driver of the truck descended, opened the hood of Roberto's car and set whatever was wrong to rights—a service for which he seemed to feel amply repaid by a pack of Fabia's Philip Morris. Again Roberto pressed the accelerator and the Lancia jolted forward, leaving the enthusiastically waving carabinieri and a cloud of dust in its wake.

Roberto, who was sulky, drove even faster than before, and they were soon whizzing through some artichoke plantations. Fabia gave a little scream as they came over a rise and saw, far below them, the temple at Segesta. It stood, or rather lay from their point of view, on a gray-green patch, much as Goethe had found it and Augustus Hare had left it—except for the buses, by which it was almost entirely surrounded.

Dusk had long since set in by the time they drew up before the Albergo delle Palme in Palermo. Fabia quickly paid Roberto such skimpy devoirs as she felt were due and went inside, but it took Alice and Giorgio somewhat longer to become disentangled.

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Michael Brownstein

Big City

As I walk down NYC I wonder into the ground
Glee a short road across my face
To a sparrow observing from the cool agenda
Of the wind in the breeze...Not to fox this into
Something you just won't be able to grip
On your way downtown into work. "Let it be clear and
distinct
Like the shoulder a French cook knows will serve four."

Knows might serve for

Always uncertain as to who will surface from the tube
Gripping a bath towel for me too. Which I wouldn't throw in
To your perfervid poet's face because you won't be a poet
Or a painter a spidery preacheress or candlestick maker
Though actually I can see you as the last. For like the sky
I have no physical third eye, psychically
Beside the point and valid as music: Now.

Do pigeons ever get headaches
Pecking as they do at the hard cement
Which is really a sidewalk? This and a dozen others
The sweatered infant asks. He is precocious of course
And steps on your stone. You offer him a palm and now
He's yowling, and his mother isn't girl anymore
Idly paused for limousine on green leaved street.
Do you lean toward the girl? Such is the tragedy by
Ugly inference of urban motherhood.

But we are all young mothers though only some show it
Barely struck by the hammer of joy.
A truck robs the eye of cobbles
But you could be looking at the truck
And keep looking, until big letters appear on one side

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Aram Saoyran

French Poets

French poets are the greatest of all.
They arrive with different smiles.
They are used to the sun and to coffee.
They smoke
Incessantly.

If you tell them a joke they weep for joy.
If you tell them a
Sad story they weep for joy.
As if they only knew joy.

We others seem
Pained by comparison. We all smile
Less than we might, a lesson
In the great French movies:

Suddenly she is smiling. Suddenly she is
Smiling. Suddenly she is smiling. Sudden
Ly she is smiling. Suddenly she is smili

—while so often we seem lost in thought.
Our skin is dry.
We buy the wrong shirts.
Or we buy the right ones but we look tired.
Our eyes are often red
From thinking.

French poets are always smiling and watching
The sun spots on the coffee.
They are gay sons-of-bitches.

1965

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Introduction

In the middle of night
in Brightlingsea
Tom Clark is
sitting here with me.

The time is
for me to write an Introduction
to his book Airplanes.

I do.
It's 11:35.
Not really "the middle of night"
but allright.

I want to
mention "yellow"
and now
green.

Often these two colors in particular
seem to be combined
in Tom's poems.

Airplanes.
The "yellow"
and now
green.

11:39
My back is to
Tom and now I'm about to
turn around.

At the last minute
I realize
Tom is reading.

1966

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Jim Carroll

Poem

for Linda Canby

Blue poles (well?) on the beach
in a snowless winter and

I'm too cold to ask you
why we're here but of course "we are"

where on the puzzled reef dwarves either
fish or drown in the abandoned ship

sharks dissever year-old children in search
of "young blood" Jersey acting like Europe

in an instant and lovely Mary kneeling along the quick tide
to be anxious with thoughts of bare oceans

that move as the thighs of an "eventual" sunlight
like bathers moving closer to their season

when again gulls perch in their lovely confusion
"alone," as now, the sand sifting through

our fingers like another's darkness. It's true,
you are always too near and I am everything

that comes moaning free and wet
through the lips of our lovely grind

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John Godfrey

Our Knees

after Rilke

I would like a word with you
now that the night is through
with you
and your faculty of making
even the most awful burden seem wild
and its wind seem grand in your hearing.
The flag of my ship rolls
in the darkness and the helm
turns cold under your gaze.
Is it your manner that dissolves the darkness
or is it my unsteadiness that
makes the room possible where trumpets
ordain our togetherness?
These are the properties of a rash dream
that we, upon waking, haul ourselves
out of bed and to our knees
to guess at its origins and what
its place is in our lives
or we fasten our boots
through the blast of smoke
that surrounds us like a king.

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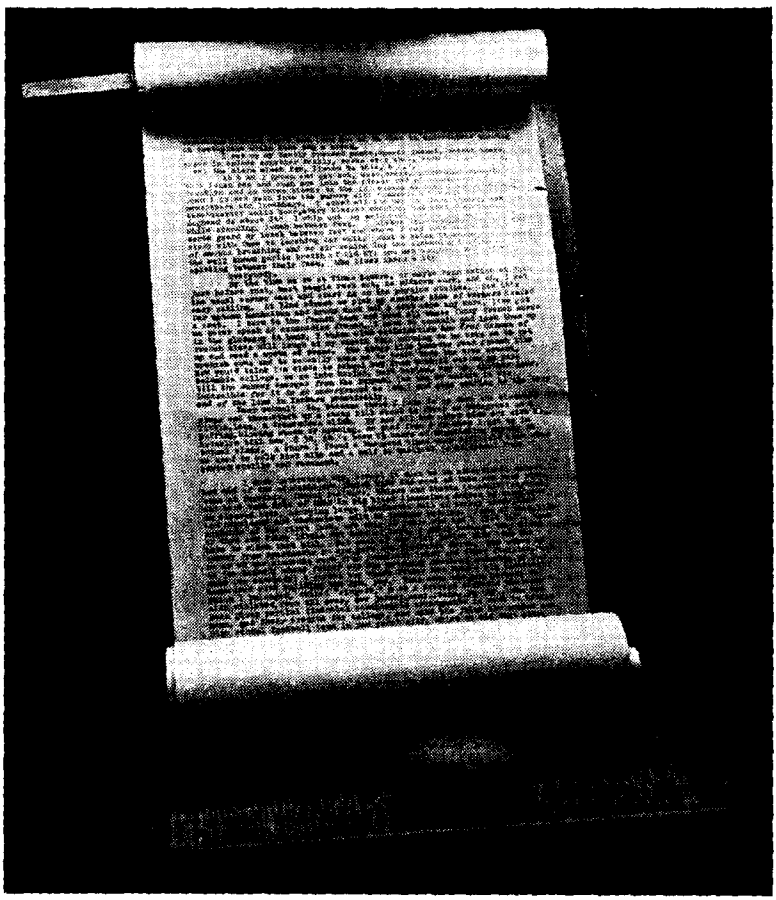

The original manuscript roll of Vanity of Duluoz. *The roll is teletype paper which comes in sheets several hundred feet long. Kerouac cuts a sheet of perhaps ten feet for an evening's work which he later scotchtapes to the preceding sheet. He works at top speed, ignoring misprints and punctuation. He corrects them when he transmits the material from the roll to a doublespace copy for the publisher. He makes no other editorial changes.*

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The Art of Fiction XLI

Jack Kerouac

Jack Kerouac is now forty-five years old. His thirteenth novel, Vanity of Duluoz *was published earlier this year. He lives with his wife of one year, Stella, and his invalid mother in a brick ranch-style house in a residential district of Lowell, Massachusetts, the city in which he spent all of his childhood. The Kerouacs have no telephone. Ted Berrigan had contacted Kerouac some months earlier and persuaded him to do the interview. When he felt the time had come for their meeting to take place, he simply showed up at the Kerouacs' house. Two friends, poets Aram Saroyan and Duncan McNaughton, accompanied him. Kerouac answered his ring; Berrigan quickly told*

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him his name and the visit's purpose. Kerouac welcomed the poets, but before he could show them in, his wife, a very determined woman, seized him from behind and told the group to leave at once.

"Jack and I began talking simultaneously, saying 'Paris Review!' 'Interview!' etc.," Berrigan recalls, "while Duncan and Aram began to slink back toward the car. All seemed lost, but I kept talking in what I hoped was a civilized, reasonable, calming and friendly tone of voice, and soon Mrs. Kerouac agreed to let us in for twenty minutes, on the condition that there be no drinking.

"Once inside, as it became evident that we actually were in pursuit of a serious purpose, Mrs. Kerouac became more friendly, and we were able to commence the interview. It seems that people still show up constantly at the Kerouacs' looking for the author of On the Road, *and stay for days, drinking all the liquor and diverting Jack from his serious occupations.*

"As the evening progressed the atmosphere changed considerably, and Mrs. Kerouac, Stella, proved a gracious and charming hostess. The most amazing thing about Jack Kerouac is his magic voice, which sounds exactly like his works, and is capable of the most astounding and disconcerting changes in no time flat. It dictates everything, including this interview.

"After the interview, Kerouac, who had been sitting throughout the interview in a President Kennedy type rocker, moved over to a big poppa chair, and said, 'So you boys are poets, hey? Well, let's hear some of your poetry.' We stayed for about an hour longer, and Aram and I read some of our things. Finally, he gave each of us a signed broadside of a recent poem of his, and we left."

Some portions of this interview have been filled out with Kerouac's written replies to questions put to him subsequent to the interview. It was felt these additions would add substance to the portrait of the author and his métier.

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INTERVIEWER

Could we put the footstool over here to put this on?

STELLA

Yes.

KEROUAC

God, you're so inadequate there, Berrigan.

INTERVIEWER

Well, I'm no tape-recorder man, Jack. I'm just a big talker, like you. O.K., we're off.

KEROUAC

O.K.? *(Whistles)* O.K.?

INTERVIEWER

Actually I'd like to start...the first book I ever read by you, oddly enough, since most people first read *On the Road*... the first one I read was *The Town and the City*...

KEROUAC

Gee!

INTERVIEWER

I checked it out of the library...

KEROUAC

Gee!... Did you read *Dr. Sax?*... *Tristessa?*...

INTERVIEWER

You better believe it. I even read *Rimbaud.* I have a copy of *Visions of Cody* that Ron Padgett bought in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

KEROUAC

Screw Ron Padgett! You know why? He started a little magazine called *White Dove Review* in Kansas City, was it? Tulsa? Oklahoma... yes. He wrote, Start our magazine off by sending us a great big poem. So I sent him the "Thrashing

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Doves." And then I sent him another one and he rejected the second one because his magazine was already started. That's to show you how punks try to make their way by scratching down on a man's back. Aw, he's no poet. You know who's a great poet? I know who the great poets are.

INTERVIEWER

Who?

KEROUAC

Let's see, is it...William Bissette of Vancouver. An Indian boy. Bill Bissette, or Bissonnette.

SAROYAN

Let's talk about Jack Kerouac.

KEROUAC

He's not better than Bill Bissette, but he's very original.

INTERVIEWER

Why don't we begin with editors. How do you...

KEROUAC

O.K. All my editors since Malcolm Cowley have had instructions to leave my prose exactly as I wrote it. In the days of Malcolm Cowley, with *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums*, I had no power to stand by my style for better or for worse. When Malcolm Cowley made endless revisions and inserted thousands of needless commas like, say, Cheyenne, Wyoming (why not just say Cheyenne Wyoming and let it go at that, for instance), why, I spent $500 making the complete restitution of the *Bums* manuscript and got a bill from Viking Press called "Revisions." Ha ho ho. And so you asked about how do I work with an editor...well nowadays I am just grateful to him for his assistance in proofreading the manuscript and in discovering logical errors, such as dates, names of places. For instance in my last book I wrote Firth of Forth then looked it up, on the suggestion of my editor, and found that I'd really sailed off the Firth of Clyde. Things like that. Or I spelled

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Aleister Crowley "Alisteir," or he discovered little mistakes about the yardage in football games...and so forth. By not revising what you've already written you simply give the reader the actual workings of your mind during the writing itself: you confess your thoughts about events in your own unchangeable way...well, look, did you ever hear a guy telling a long wild tale to a bunch of men in a bar and all are listening and smiling, did you ever hear that guy stop to revise himself, go back to a previous sentence to improve it, to defray its rhythmic thought impact... If he pauses to blow his nose, isn't he planning his next sentence? and when he lets that next sentence loose, isn't it once and for all the way he wanted to say it? Doesn't he depart the thought of that sentence and, as Shakespeare says, "forever holds his tongue" on the subject, since he's passed over it like a part of the river flows over a rock once and for all and never returns and can never flow any other way in time? Incidentally, as for my bug against periods, that was for the prose in *October in the Railroad Earth*, very experimental, intended to clack along all the way like a steam engine pulling a 100-car freight with a talky caboose at the end, that was my way at the time and it still can be done if the thinking during the swift writing is confessional and pure and all excited with the life of it. And be sure of this, I spent my entire youth writing slowly with revisions and endless re-hashing speculation and deleting and got so I was writing one sentence a day and the sentence had no FEELING. Goddamn it, FEELING is what I like in art, not CRAFTINESS and the hiding of feelings.

INTERVIEWER

What encouraged you to use the "spontaneous" style of *On the Road?*

KEROUAC

I got the idea for the spontaneous style of *On the Road* from seeing how good old Neal Cassady wrote his letters to me, all first person, fast, mad, confessional, completely serious, all detailed, with real names in his case however (being letters). I

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remembered also Goethe's admonition, well Goethe's prophecy that the future literature of the West would be confessional in nature; also Dostoevsky prophesied as much and might have started in on that if he'd lived long enough to do his projected masterwork, *The Great Sinner*. Cassady also began his early youthful writing with attempts at slow, painstaking, and-all-that-crap craft business, but got sick of it like I did, seeing it wasn't getting out his guts and heart the way it *felt* coming out. But I got the flash from his style. It's a cruel lie for those West Coast punks to say that I got the idea of *On the Road* from him. All his letters to me were about his younger days before I met him, a child with his father, et cetera, and about his later teenage experiences. The letter he sent me is erroneously reported to be a 13,000 word letter...no, the 13,000 word piece was his novel *The First Third*, which he kept in his possession. The letter, the main letter I mean, was 40,000 words long, mind you, a whole short novel. It was the greatest piece of writing I ever saw, better'n anybody in America, or at least enough to make Melville, Twain, Dreiser, Wolfe, I dunno who, spin in their graves. Allen Ginsberg asked me to lend him this vast letter so he could read it. He read it, then loaned it to a guy called Gerd Stern who lived on a houseboat in Sausalito California, in 1955, and this fellow lost the letter: overboard I presume. Neal and I called it, for convenience, the *Joan Anderson Letter*...all about a Christmas weekend in the poolhalls, hotel rooms and jails of Denver, with hilarious events thoughout and tragic too, even a drawing of a window, with measurements to make the reader understand, all that. Now listen: this letter would have been printed under Neal's copyright, if we could find it, but as you know, it was my property as a letter to me, so Allen shouldn't have been so careless with it, nor the guy on the houseboat. If we can unearth this entire 40,000 word letter Neal shall be justified. We also did so much fast talking between the two of us, on tape recorders, way back in 1952, and listened to them so much, we both got the secret of LINGO in telling a tale and figured that was the only way to express the speed and tension and ecstatic tomfoolery of the age.... Is that enough?

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INTERVIEWER

How do you think this style has changed since *On the Road?*

KEROUAC

What style? Oh, the style of *On the Road.* Well as I say, Cowley riddled the original style of the manuscript there, without my power to complain, and since then my books are all published as written, as I say, and the style has varied from the highly experimental speedwriting of *Railroad Earth* to the ingrown toenail packed mystical style of *Tristessa,* the *Notes-from-the-Underground* (by Dostoevsky) confessional madness of *The Subterraneans,* the perfection of the three as one in *Big Sur,* I'd say, which tells a plain tale in a smooth buttery literate run, to *Satori in Paris* which is really the first book I wrote with drink at my side (cognac and malt liquor)...and not to overlook *Book of Dreams,* the style of a person half awake from sleep and ripping it out in pencil by the bed...yes, pencil... what a job! bleary eyes, insaned mind bemused and mystified by sleep, details that pop out even as you write them you don't know what they mean, till you wake up, have coffee, look at it, and see the logic of dreams in dream language itself, see?...and finally I decided in my tired middle age to slow down and did *Vanity of Duluoz* in a more moderate style so that, having been so esoteric all these years, some earlier readers would come back and see what ten years had done to my life and thinking...which is after all the only thing I've got to offer, the true story of what I saw and how I saw it.

INTERVIEWER

You dictated sections of *Visions of Cody.* Have you used this method since?

KEROUAC

I didn't dictate sections of *Visions of Cody.* I typed up a segment of taped conversation with Neal Cassady, or Cody, talking about his early adventures in L.A. It's four chapters. I haven't used this method since; it really doesn't come out right, well, with Neal and with myself, when all written down

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and with all the Ahs and the Ohs and the Ahums and the fearful fact that the damn thing is turning and you're *forced* not to waste electricity or tape.... Then again, I don't know, I might have to resort to that eventually; I'm getting tired and going blind. This question stumps me. At any rate, everybody's doing it, I hear, but I'm still scribbling.... McLuhan says we're getting more oral so I guess we'll all learn to talk into the machine better and better.

INTERVIEWER

What is that state of "Yeatsian semi-trance" which provides the ideal atmosphere for spontaneous writing?

KEROUAC

Well, there it is, how can you be in a trance with your mouth yapping away...writing at least is a silent meditation even though you're going 100 miles an hour. Remember that scene in *La Dolce Vita* where the old priest is mad because a mob of maniacs have shown up to see the tree where the kids saw the Virgin Mary? He says, "Visions are not available in all this frenetic foolishness and yelling and pushing; visions are only obtainable in silence and meditation." Thar. Yup.

INTERVIEWER

You have said that haiku is not written spontaneously but is reworked and revised. Is this true of all your poetry? Why must the method for writing poetry differ from that of prose?

KEROUAC

No, first; haiku is best reworked and revised. I know, I tried. It has to be completely economical, no foliage and flowers and language rhythm, it has to be a simple little picture in three little lines. At least that's the way the old masters did it, spending months on three little lines and coming up, say, with:

In the abandoned boat,
The hail
Bounces about.

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That's Shiki.

But as for my regular English verse, I knocked it off fast like the prose, using, get this, the size of the notebook page for the form and length of the poem, just as a musician has to get out, a jazz musician, his statement within a certain number of bars, within one chorus, which spills over into the next, but he has to stop where the chorus page *stops*. And finally, too, in poetry you can be completely free to say anything you want, you don't have to tell a story, you can use secret puns, that's why I always say, when writing prose, "No time for poetry now, get your plain tale." *(Drinks are served)*

INTERVIEWER

How do you write haiku?

KEROUAC

Haiku? You want to hear Haiku? You see you got to compress into three short lines a great big story. First you start with a haiku situation—so you see a leaf, as I told her the other night, falling on the back of a sparrow during a great big October wind storm. A big leaf falls on the back of a little sparrow. How you going to compress that into three lines? Now in Japanese you got to compress it into seventeen syllables. We don't have to do that in American—or English—because we don't have the same syllabic bullshit that your Japanese language has. So you say: Little sparrow—you don't have to say little—everybody knows a sparrow is little...because they fall...so you say

> Sparrow
> with big leaf on its back—
> Windstorm

No good, don't work, I reject it.

> A little sparrow
> when an Autumn leaf suddenly sticks to its back
> from the wind.

Hah, that does it. No, it's a little bit too long. See? It's already a little bit too long, Berrigan, you know what I mean?

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INTERVIEWER

Seems like there's an extra word or something, like "when." How about leaving out "when?" Say:

A sparrow
an autumn leaf suddenly sticks to its back—
From the wind!

KEROUAC

Hey, that's all right. I think "when" was the extra word. You got the right idea there, O'Hara! A sparrow, an autumn leaf suddenly—we don't have to say "suddenly" do we?

A sparrow
an autumn leaf sticks to its back—
From the wind!

(Kerouac writes final version into spiral notebook)

INTERVIEWER

"Suddenly" is absolutely the kind of word we don't need there. When you publish that will you give me a footnote saying you asked me a couple of questions?

KEROUAC

(Writes) Berrigan noticed. Right?

INTERVIEWER

Do you write poetry very much? Do you write other poetry besides haiku?

KEROUAC

It's hard to write haiku. I write long silly Indian poems. You want to hear my long silly Indian Poem?

INTERVIEWER

What kind of Indian?

KEROUAC

Iroquois. As you know from looking at me. *(Reads from notebook)*

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On the lawn on the way to the store
44 years old for the neighbors to hear
hey, looka, Ma I hurt myself. Especially
with that squirt.

What's that mean?

INTERVIEWER

Say it again.

KEROUAC

Hey, looka, Ma, I hurt myself, while on the way to the store I hurt myself I fell on the lawn I yell to my mother hey looka, Ma, I hurt myself. I add, especially with that squirt.

INTERVIEWER

You fell over a sprinkler?

KEROUAC

No, my father's squirt into my Ma.

INTERVIEWER

From that distance?

KEROUAC

Oh, I quit. No, I know you wouldn't get that one. I had to explain it. *(Opens notebook again and reads)*

Goy means Joy.

INTERVIEWER

Send that one to Ginsberg.

KEROUAC

(Reads)

Happy people so called are hypocrites—it means
the happiness wavelength can't work without
necessary deceit, without certain scheming and lies and
hiding. Hypocrisy and deceit, no Indians. No smiling.

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INTERVIEWER

No Indians?

KEROUAC

The reason you really have a hidden hostility towards me, Berrigan, is because of the French and Indian War.

INTERVIEWER

That could be.

SAROYAN

I saw a football picture of you in the cellar of Horace Mann. You were pretty fat in those days.

STELLA

Tuffy! Here Tuffy! Come on kitty...

KEROUAC

Stella, let's have another bottle or two. Yeah, I'm going to murder everybody if they let me go. I did. Hot fudge sundaes! Boom! I used to have two or three hot fudge sundaes before every game. Lou Little...

INTERVIEWER

He was your coach at Columbia?

KEROUAC

Lou Little was my coach at Columbia. My father went up to him and said you sneaky long-nosed finagler.... He says why don't you let my son, Ti Jean, Jack, start in the Army game so he can get back at his great enemy from Lowell? And Lou Little says because he's not ready. Who says he's not ready? I say he's not ready. My father says why you long nose banana nose big crook, get out of my sight! And he comes stomping out of the office smoking a big cigar. Come out of here Jack, let's get out of here. So we left Columbia together. And also when I was in the United States Navy during the war—1942—right in front of the Admirals, he walked in

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and says Jack, you are right! The Germans should not be our enemies. They should be our allies, as it will be proven in time. And the Admirals were all there with their mouths open, and my father would take no shit from nobody—my father didn't have nothing but a big belly about this big *(gestures with arms out in front of him)* and he would go POOM! *(Kerouac gets up and demonstrates, by puffing his belly out in front of him with explosive force and saying POOM!)* One time he was walking down the street with my mother, arm in arm, down the lower East Side. In the old days, you know, the 1940's. And here comes a whole bunch of rabbis walking arm in arm...tee-dah teedah-teedah... and they wouldn't part for this Christian man and his wife. So my father went POOM! and he knocked a rabbi right in the gutter. Then he took my mother and walked on through.

Now, if you don't like that, Berrigan, that's the history of my family. They don't take no shit from nobody. In due time I ain't going to take no shit from nobody. You can record that.

Is this my wine?

INTERVIEWER

Was *The Town and the City* written under spontaneous composition principles?

KEROUAC

Some of it, sire. I also wrote another version that's hidden under the floorboards, with Burroughs.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I've heard rumors of that book. Everybody wants to get at that book.

KEROUAC

It's called *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks.* The hippos. Because Burroughs and I were sitting in a bar one night and we heard a newscaster saying... "and so the Egyptians attacked blah blah...and meanwhile there was a great fire in

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the zoo in London and the fire raced across the fields and the hippos were boiled in their tanks! Goodnight everyone!" That's Bill, he noticed that. Because he notices them kind of things.

INTERVIEWER

You really did type up his *Naked Lunch* manuscript for him in Tangiers?

KEROUAC

No...the first part. The first two chapters. I went to bed, and I had nightmares...of great long balonies coming out of my mouth. I had nightmares typing up that manuscript...I said, "Bill!" He said, "Keep typing it." He said, "I bought you a goddamn kerosene stove here in North Africa, you know." Among the Arabs... it's hard to get a kerosene stove. I'd light up the kerosene stove, and take some bedding and a little pot, or kif as we called it there...or maybe sometimes hasheesh... there by the way it's legal...and I'd go toktoktoktoktoktok and when I went to bed at night, these things kept coming out of my mouth. So finally these other guys showed up like Alan Ansen and Allen Ginsberg, and they spoiled the whole manuscript because they didn't type it up the way he wrote it.

INTERVIEWER

Grove Press has been issuing his Olympia Press books with lots of changes and things added.

KEROUAC

Well, in my opinion Burroughs hasn't given us anything that would interest our breaking hearts since he wrote like he did in *Naked Lunch*. Now all he does is that break-up stuff it's called...where you write a page of prose, you write another page of prose...then you fold it over and you cut it up and you put it together...and shit like that...

INTERVIEWER

What about *Junkie*, though?

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KEROUAC

It's a classic. It's better than Hemingway—it's just like Hemingway but even a little better too. It says: Danny comes into my pad one night and says, Hey, Bill, can I borrow your sap. Your sap—do you know what a sap is?

SAROYAN

A blackjack?

KEROUAC

It's a blackjack. Bill says, I pulled out my underneath drawer, and underneath some nice shirts I pulled out my blackjack. I gave it to Danny and said, Now don't lose it Danny—Danny says, *Don't worry I won't lose it. He goes off and loses it.*

Sap...blackjack...that's me. Sap.....blackjack.

INTERVIEWER

That's a Haiku: sap, blackjack, that's me. You better write that down.

KEROUAC

No.

INTERVIEWER

Maybe I'll write that down. Do you mind if I use that one?

KEROUAC

Up your ass with Mobil gas!

INTERVIEWER

You don't believe in collaborations? Have you ever done any collaborations, other than with publishers?

KEROUAC

I did a couple of collaborations in bed with Bill Cannastra in lofts. With blondes.

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INTERVIEWER

Was he the guy that tried to climb off the subway train at Astor Place, in Holmes' *Go?*

KEROUAC

Yes. Yeah, well he says let's take all our clothes off and run around the block...it was raining you know. Sixteenth Street off Seventh Avenue. I said, well, I'll keep my shorts on—he says no, no shorts. I said I'm going to keep my shorts on. He said all right, but I'm not going to wear mine. And we trot trottrot trot down the block. Sixteenth to Seventeenth...and we come back and run up the stairs—nobody saw us.

INTERVIEWER

What time of day?

KEROUAC

But he was absolutely naked...about 3 or 4 A.M. It rained. And everybody was there. He was dancing on broken glass and playing Bach. Bill was the guy who used to teeter off his roof—six flights up you know? He'd go—"you want me to fall?"—we'd say no, Bill, no. He was an Italian. Italians are wild you know.

INTERVIEWER

Did he write? What did he do?

KEROUAC

He says, "Jack, come with me and look down through this peephole." We looked down through the peephole, we saw a lot of things...into his toilet.

I said, "I'm not interested in that, Bill." He said, "You're not interested in anything." Auden would come the next day, the next afternoon, for cocktails. Maybe with Chester Kallman. Tennessee Williams.

INTERVIEWER

Was Neal Cassady around in those days? Did you already know Neal Cassady when you were involved with Bill Cannastra?

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KEROUAC

Oh yes, yes, ahem...he had a great big pack of pot. He always was a pot happy man.

INTERVIEWER

Why do you think Neal doesn't write?

KEROUAC

He has written...beautifully! He has written better than I have. Neal's a very funny guy. He's a real Californian. We had more fun than 5000 Socony Gasoline Station attendants can have. In my opinion he's the most intelligent man I've ever met in my life. Neal Cassady. He's a Jesuit by the way. He used to sing in the choir. He was a choir boy in the Catholic churches of Denver. And he taught me everything that I now do believe about anything that there may be to be believed about divinity.

INTERVIEWER

About Edgar Cayce?

KEROUAC

No, before he found out about Edgar Cayce he told me all these things in the section of the life he led when he was on the road with me—he said, We know God, don't we Jack? I said, Yessir boy. He said, Don't we know that nothing's going to happen wrong? Yessir. And we're going to go on and on... and hmmmmm ja-bmmmmmmm.... He was perfect. And he's always perfect. Everytime he comes to see me I can't get a word in edgewise.

INTERVIEWER

You wrote about Neal playing football, in *Visions of Cody*.

KEROUAC

Yes, he was a very good football player. He picked up two

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beatniks that time in blue jeans in North Beach Frisco. He said I got to go, bang bang, do I got to go? He's working on the railroad...had his watch out...2:15, boy I got to be there by *2:20*. I tell you boys drive me over down there so I be on time with my train...So I can get my train on down to—what's the name of that place—San Jose? They say sure kid and Neal says here's the pot. So—"We maybe look like great bleat beatniks with great beards...but we are cops. And we are arresting you."

So, a guy went to the jailhouse and interviewed him from the New York Post and he said tell that Kerouac if he still believes in me to send me a typewriter. So I sent Allen Ginsberg one hundred dollars to get a typewriter for Neal. And Neal got the typewriter. And he wrote notes on it, but they wouldn't let him take the notes out. I don't know where the typewriter is. Genet wrote all of *Our Lady of the Flowers* in the shithouse...the jailhouse. There's a great writer, Jean Genet. He kept writing and kept writing until he got to a point where he was going to come by writing about it...until he came into his bed—in the can. The French can. The French jail. Prison. And that was the end of the chapter. Every chapter is Genet coming off. Which I must admit Sartre noticed.

INTERVIEWER

You think that's a different kind of spontaneous writing?

KEROUAC

Well, I could go to jail and I could write every night a chapter about Magee, Magoo, and Molly. It's beautiful. Genet is really *the* most honest writer we've had since Kerouac and Burroughs. But he came before us. He's older. Well, he's the same age as Burroughs. But I don't think I've been dishonest. Man, I've had a good time! God, man, I rode around this country free as a bee. But Genet is a very tragic and beautiful writer. And I give them the crown. And the laurel wreath. I don't give the laurel wreath to Richard Wilbur! *Or* Robert Lowell. Give it to Jean Genet and William Seward Burroughs. *And* to Allen Ginsberg and to Gregory Corso, especially.

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INTERVIEWER

Jack, how about Peter Orlovsky's writings. Do you like Peter's things?

KEROUAC

Peter Orlovsky is an idiot!! He's a Russian idiot. Not even Russian, he's Polish.

INTERVIEWER

He's written some fine poems.

KEROUAC

Oh yeah. My...what poems?

INTERVIEWER

He has a beautiful poem called "Second Poem."

KEROUAC

"My brother pisses in the bed...and I go in the subway and I see two people kissing..."

INTERVIEWER

No, the poem that says "it's more creative to paint the floor than to sweep it."

KEROUAC

That's a lot of shit! That is the kind of poetry that was written by another Polish idiot who was a Polish nut called Apollinaire. Apollinaire is not his real name, you know.

There are some fellows in San Francisco that told me that Peter was an idiot. But I like idiots, and I enjoy his poetry. Think about that, Berrigan. But for my taste, it's Gregory.

Give me one of those.

INTERVIEWER

One of these pills?

KEROUAC

Yeah. What are they? Forked clarinets?

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INTERVIEWER

They'recalled Obetrol. Neal is the one that told me about them.

KEROUAC

Overtones?

INTERVIEWER

Overtones? No, overcoats.

SAROYAN

What was that you said...at the back of the Grove anthology...that you let the line go a little longer to fill it up with secret images that come at the end of the sentence.

KEROUAC

He's a real Armenian! Sediment. Delta. Mud. It's where you start a poem...

> As I was walking down the street one day
> I saw a lake where people were cutting off my rear,
> 17,000 priests singing like George Burns

and then you go on...

> And I'm making jokes about me
> and breaking my bones in the earth
> and here I am the great John Armenian
> coming back to earth

now you remember where you were in the beginning and you say...

> Ahaha! Tatatatadooda... Screw Turkey!

See? You remembered the line at the end...you lose your mind in the middle.

SAROYAN

Right.

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KEROUAC

That applies to prose as well as poetry.

INTERVIEWER

But in prose you are telling a story...

KEROUAC

In prose you make the paragraph. Every paragraph is a poem.

INTERVIEWER

Is that how you write a paragraph?

KEROUAC

When I was running downtown there, and I was going to do this, and I was laying there, with that girl there, and a guy took out his scissors and I took him inside there, he showed me some dirty pictures. And I went out and fell downstairs with the potato bags.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever like Gertrude Stein's work?

KEROUAC

Never interested me too much. I liked *Melanctha* a little bit.

I should really go to school and teach these kids. I could make two thousand bucks a week. You can't learn these things. You know why? Because you have to be born with tragic fathers.

INTERVIEWER

You can only do that if you are born in New England.

KEROUAC

Incidentally, my father said your father wasn't tragic.

SAROYAN

I don't think my father is tragic.

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KEROUAC

My father said that Saroyan...William Saroyan ain't tragic at all...he's fulla shit. And I had a big argument with him. *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* is pretty tragic, I would say.

SAROYAN

He was just a young man then, you know.

KEROUAC

Yeah, but he was hungry, and he was on Times Square. Flying. A young man on the flying trapeze. That was a beautiful story. It killed me when I was a kid.

INTERVIEWER

Do you remember a story by William Saroyan about the Indian who came to town and bought a car and got the little kid to drive it for him?

STELLA

A Cadillac.

KEROUAC

What town was that?

SAROYAN

Fresno. That was Fresno.

KEROUAC

Well, you remember the night I was taking a big nap and you came up outside my window on a white horse...

SAROYAN

The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse.

KEROUAC

And I looked out the window and said what is this? You said, "My name is Aram. And I'm on a white horse."

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SAROYAN

Moorad.

KEROUAC

My name is Moorad, excuse me. No, my name is... I was Aram, you were Moorad. You said, "Wake up!" I didn't want to wake up. I wanted to sleep. *My Name is Aram* is the name of the book. You stole a white horse from a farmer and you woke up me, Aram, to go riding with you.

SAROYAN

Moorad was the crazy one who stole the horse.

KEROUAC

Hey, what's that you gave me there?

INTERVIEWER

Obetrol.

KEROUAC

Oh, obies.

INTERVIEWER

What about jazz and bop as influences rather than...Saroyan, Hemingway and Wolfe?

KEROUAC

Yes, jazz and bop, in the sense of a, say, a tenor man drawing a breath and blowing a phrase on his saxophone, till he runs out of breath, and when he does, his sentence, his statement's been made...that's how I therefore separate my sentences, as breath separations of the mind...I formulated the theory of breath as measure, in prose and verse, never mind what Olson, Charles Olson says, I formulated that theory in 1953 at the request of Burroughs and Ginsberg. Then there's the raciness and freedom and humor of jazz instead of all that dreary analysis and things like "James entered the room, and

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lit a cigarette. He thought Jane might have thought this too vague a gesture..." You know the stuff. As for Saroyan, yes I loved him as a teenager, he really got me out of the 19th century rut I was trying to study, not only his funny tone but his neat Armenian poetic I don't know what...he just got me...Hemingway was fascinating, the pearls of words on a white page giving you an exact picture...but Wolfe was a torrent of American heaven and hell that opened my eyes to America as a subject in itself.

INTERVIEWER

How about the movies?

KEROUAC

Yes, we've all been influenced by movies. Malcolm Cowley incidentally mentioned this many times. He's very perceptive sometimes: he mentioned that *Doctor Sax* continually mentions urine, and quite naturally it does because I had no other place to write it but on a closed toilet seat in a little tile toilet in Mexico City so as to get away from the guests inside the apartment. There incidentally is a style truly hallucinated as I wrote it all on pot. No pun intended. Ho ho.

INTERVIEWER

How has Zen influenced your work?

KEROUAC

What's really influenced my work is the Mahayana Buddhism, the original Buddhism of Gotama Sakyamuni, the Buddha himself, of the India of old...Zen is what's left of his Buddhism, or Bodhi, after its passing into China and then into Japan. The part of Zen that's influenced my writing is the Zen contained in the haiku, like I said, the three line, seventeen syllable poems written hundreds of years ago by guys like Basho, Issa, Shiki, and there've been recent masters. A sentence that's short and sweet with a sudden jump of thought in it is a kind of haiku, and there's a lot of freedom and fun in surprising yourself with that, let the mind willy-nilly jump from

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the branch to the bird. But my serious Buddhism, that of ancient India, has influenced that part in my writing that you might call religious, or fervent, or pious, almost as much as Catholicism has. Original Buddhism referred to continual conscious compassion, brotherhood, the *dana paramita* meaning the perfection of charity, don't step on the bug, all that, humility, mendicancy, the sweet sorrowful face of the Buddha (who was of Aryan origin by the way, I mean of Persian warrior caste, and not Oriental as pictured)...in original Buddhism no young kid coming to a monastery was warned that "here we bury them alive." He was simply given soft encouragement to meditate and be kind. The beginning of Zen was when Buddha, however, assembled all the monks together to announce a sermon and choose the first patriarch of the Mahayana church: instead of speaking, he simply held up a flower. Everybody was flabbergasted except Kasyapa, who smiled. Kasyapa was appointed the first patriarch. This idea appealed to the Chinese like the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng who said, "From the beginning nothing ever was" and wanted to tear up the records of Buddha's sayings as kept in the sutras; sutras are "threads of discourse." In a way, then, Zen is a gentle but goofy form of heresy, though there must be some real kindly old monks somewhere and we've heard about the nutty ones. I haven't been to Japan. Your Maha roshi yoshi is simply a disciple of all this and not the founder of anything new at all, of course. On the Johnny Carson show he didn't even mention Buddha's name. Maybe his Buddha is Mia.

INTERVIEWER

How come you've never written about Jesus? You've written about Buddha. Wasn't Jesus a great guy too?

KEROUAC

I've never written about Jesus? In other words, you're an insane phoney who comes to my house...and...all I *write about* is Jesus. I am Everhard Mercurian, General of the Jesuit Army.

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SAROYAN

What's the difference between Jesus and Buddha?

KEROUAC

That's a very good question. There is no difference.

SAROYAN

No difference?

KEROUAC

But there is a difference between the original Buddha of India, and the Buddha of Vietnam who just shaves his hair and puts on a yellow robe and is a Communist agitating agent. The original Buddha wouldn't even walk on young grass so that he wouldn't destroy it. He was born in Gorakpur, the son of the Consul of the invading Persian hordes. And he was called Sage of the Warriors, and he had 17,000 broads dancing for him all night, holding out flowers, saying you want to smell it, my Lord? He says git outta here you whore. He laid a lot of them you know. But by the time he was thirty-one years old he got sick and tired...his father was protecting him from what was going on outside the town. And so he went out on a horse, against his father's orders and he saw a woman dying—a man being burnt on a ghat. And he said, What is all this death and decay? The servant said that is the way things go on. Your father was hiding you from the way things go on.

He says, What? My father!!—Get my horse, saddle my horse! Ride me into the forest! They ride into the forest; he says, Now take the saddle off the horse. Put it on your horse, hang it on...take my horse by the rein and ride back to the castle and tell my father I'll never see him again! And the servant, Kandaka, cried, he said, I'll never see you again. I don't care! Go on! Shoosh! get away!!

He spent seven years in the forest. Biting his teeth together. Nothing happened. Tormenting himself with starvation. He said, I will keep my teeth bit together until I find the cause of death. Then one day he was stumbling across the Rapti river,

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and he fainted in the river. And a young girl came by with a bowl of milk and said, My lord, a bowl of milk. *(Slurpppp)* He said, That gives me great energy, thank you my dear. Then he went and sat under the Bo tree. Figuerosa. The fig tree. He said, Now...*(Demonstrates posture)*...I will cross my legs... and grit my teeth until I find the cause of death. Two o'clock in the morning, 100,000 phantoms assailed him. He didn't move. Three o'clock in the morning, the great blue ghosts!! Arrghhh!!! All *accosted* him. (You see I am really Scottish.) Four o'clock in the morning the mad maniacs of hell...came out of manhole covers...in New York City. You know Wall Street where the steam comes out? You know Wall Street, where the manhole covers...steam comes up? You take off them covers—yaaaaaahhh!!!!! Six o'clock, everything was peaceful—the birds started to trill, and he said, "Aha!... the cause of death...the cause of death is birth."

Simple? So he started walking down the road to Benares in India...with long hair, like you, see.

So, three guys. One says hey, here comes Buddha there who uh starved with us in the forest. When he sits down here on that bucket, don't wash his feet. So Buddha sits down on the bucket...the guy rushes up and washes his feet. Why dost thou wash his feet? Buddha says, "Because I go to Benares to beat the drum of life." And what is that? "That the cause of death is birth." "What do you mean?" "I'll show you."

A woman comes up with a dead baby in her arms. Says, Bring my child back to life if you are the Lord. He says, Sure I'll do that anytime. Just go and find one family in Sravasti that ain't had a death in the last five years. Get a mustard seed from them and bring it to me. And I'll bring your child back to life. She went all over town, man, two million people, Sravasti the town was, a bigger town than Benares by the way, and she came back and said, I can't find no such family. They've all had deaths within five years. He said, "Then, bury your baby."

Then, his jealous cousin, Devadatta, (that's Ginsberg you see... I am Buddha and Ginsberg is Devadatta) gets this elephant drunk...great big bull elephant drunk on whiskey. The ele-

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phant goes up!!!! *(Trumpets like elephant going up)*—with a big trunk, and Buddha comes up in the road and gets the elephant and goes like this *(Kneels)*. And the elephant kneels down. "You are buried in sorrow's mud! Quiet your trunk! Stay there!"...He's an elephant trainer. Then Devadatta rolled a big boulder over a cliff. And it almost hit Buddha's head. Just missed. Boooom! He says, That's Devadatta again. Then Buddha went like this *(Paces back and forth)* in front of his boys, you see. Behind him was his cousin that loved him...Ananda ...which means love in Sanskrit. *(Keeps pacing)* This is what you do in jail to keep in shape.

I know a lot of stories about Buddha, but I don't know exactly what he said every time. But I know what he said about the guy who spit at him. He said, "Since I can't use your abuse you may have it back." He was great. *(Kerouac plays piano. Drinks are served.)*

SAROYAN

There's something there.

INTERVIEWER

My mother used to play that. I'm not sure how we can transcribe those notes onto a page. We may have to include a record of you playing the piano. Will you play that piece again for the record, Mr. Paderewski? Can you play "Alouette?"

KEROUAC

No. Only Afro-Germanic music. After all, I'm a square head. I wonder what whiskey will do to those obies.

INTERVIEWER

What about ritual and superstition? Do you have any about yourself when you get down to work?

KEROUAC

I had a ritual once of lighting a candle and writing by its light and blowing it out when I was done for the night...also kneeling and praying before starting (I got that from a French

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movie about George Frederick Handel)...but now I simply hate to write. My superstition? I'm beginning to suspect that full moon. Also I'm hung up on the number 9 though I'm told a Piscean like myself should stick to number 7; but I try to do 9 touchdowns a day, that is, I stand on my head in the bathroom, on a slipper, and touch the floor 9 times with my toe tips, while balanced. This is incidentally more than Yoga, it's an athletic feat, I mean imagine calling me "unbalanced" after that. Frankly I do feel that my mind is going. So another "ritual" as you call it, is to pray to Jesus to preserve my sanity and my energy so I can help my family: that being my paralyzed mother, and my wife, and the ever-present kitties. Okay?

INTERVIEWER

You typed out *On the Road* in three weeks, *The Subterraneans*...in three days and nights. Do you still produce at this fantastic rate? Can you say something of the genesis of a work before you sit down and begin that terrific typing—how much of it is set in your mind, for example?

KEROUAC

You think out what actually happened, you tell friends long stories about it, you mull it over in your mind, you connect it together at leisure, then when the time comes to pay the rent again you force yourself to sit at the typewriter, or at the writing notebook, and get it over with as fast as you can... and there's no harm in that because you've got the whole story lined up. Now how that's done depends on what kind of steeltrap you've got up in that little old head. This sounds boastful but a girl once told me I had a steeltrap brain, meaning I'd catch her with a statement she'd made an hour ago even though our talk had rambled a million lightyears away from that point...you know what I mean, like a lawyer's mind, say. All of it is in my mind, naturally, except that language that is used at the time that it is used.... And as for *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans*, no I can't write that fast any more.... Writing the Subs in three nights was really a fantastic

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athletic feat as well as mental, you shoulda seen me after I was done...I was pale as a sheet and had lost fifteen pounds and looked strange in the mirror. What I do now is write something like an average of 8,000 words a sitting, in the middle of the night, and another about a week later, resting and sighing in between. I really hate to write. I get no fun out of it because I can't get up and say I'm working, close my door, have coffee brought to me, and sit there camping like a "man of letters" "doing his eight hour day of work" and thereby incidentally filling the printing world with a lot of dreary self-imposed cant and bombast...bombast is Scottish word for stuffing for a pillow. Haven't you heard a politician use 1500 words to say something he could have said in exactly three words? So I get it out of the way so as not to bore myself either.

SAROYAN

Do you usually try to see everything clearly and not think of any words—just to see everything as clear as possible and then write out of the feeling. With *Tristessa*, for example.

KEROUAC

You sound like a writing seminar at Indiana University.

SAROYAN

I know but...

KEROUAC

All I did was suffer with that poor girl and then when she fell on her head and almost killed herself...remember when she fell on her head?...and she was all busted up and everything. She was the most gorgeous little Indian chick you ever saw. I say Indian, pure Indian. Esperanza Villanueva. Villanueva is a Spanish name from I don't know where—Castile. But she's Indian. So she's half Indian, half Spanish...beauty. Absolute beauty. She had bones, man, just bones, skin and bones. And I didn't write in the book how I finally nailed her. You know? I did. I finally nailed her. She said, "Shhhhhhhhhh! Don't let the landlord hear." She said, "Remember, I'm very

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weak and sick." I said, "I know, I've been writing a book about how you're weak and sick."

INTERVIEWER

How come you didn't put that part in the book?

KEROUAC

Because Claude's wife told me not to put it in. She said it would spoil the book.

But it was not a conquest. She was out like a light. On M. M., that's Morphine. And in fact I made a big run for her from way uptown to downtown to the slum district...and I said, here's your stuff. She said, "Shhhhhh!" She gave herself a shot...and I said, Ah...now's the time. And I got my little nogood piece. But...it was certainly justification of Mexico!

STELLA

Here kitty! He's gone out again.

KEROUAC

She was nice, you would have liked her. Her real name was Esperanza. You know what that means?

INTERVIEWER

No.

KEROUAC

In Spanish, hope. Tristessa means in Spanish, sadness, but her real name was Hope. And she's now married to the Police Chief of Mexico City.

STELLA

Not quite.

KEROUAC

Well, you're not Esperanza—I'll tell you that.

STELLA

No, I know that, dear.

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KEROUAC

She was the skinniest...and shy...as a rail.

STELLA

She's married to one of the lieutenants, you told me, not to the Chief.

KEROUAC

She's all right. One of these days I'm going to go see her again.

STELLA

Over my dead body.

INTERVIEWER

Were you really writing *Tristessa* while you were there in Mexico? You didn't write it later?

KEROUAC

First part written in Mexico, second part written in...Mexico. That's right. '55 first part, '56 second part. What's the importance about that? I'm not Charles Olson, the great artist!

INTERVIEWER

We're just getting the facts.

KEROUAC

Charles Olson gives you all the dates. You know. Everything about how he found the hound dog on the beach in Gloucester. Found somebody jacking-off on the beach at... what do they call it? Vancouver Beach? Dig Dog River?... Dogtown. That's what they call it, "Dogtown." Well this is Shit-town on the Merrimac. Lowell is called Shit-town on the Merrimac. I'm not going to write a poem called Shit-town and insult my town. But if I was six foot six I could write anything, couldn't I?

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INTERVIEWER

How do you get along now with other writers? Do you correspond with them?

KEROUAC

I correspond with John Clellon Holmes but less and less each year, I'm getting lazy. I can't answer my fan mail because I haven't got a secretary to take dictation, do the typing, get the stamps, envelopes, all that...and I have nothing to answer. I ain't gonna spend the rest of my life smiling and shaking hands and sending and receiving platitudes, like a candidate for political office, because I'm a writer—I've got to let my mind alone, like Greta Garbo. Yet when I go out, or receive sudden guests, we all have more fun than a barrel of monkeys.

INTERVIEWER

What are the work-destroyers?

KEROUAC

Work-destroyers...work-destroyers. Time-killers? I'd say mainly the attentions which are tendered to a writer of "notoriety" (notice I don't say "fame") by secretly ambitious would-be writers, who come around, or write, or call, for the sake of the services which are properly the services of a bloody literary agent. When I was an unknown struggling young writer, as saying goes, I did my own footwork, I hotfooted up and down Madison Avenue for years, publisher to publisher, agent to agent, and never once in my life wrote a letter to a published famous author asking for advice, or help, or, in Heaven above, have the nerve to actually *mail* my manuscripts to some poor author who then has to hustle to mail it back before he's accused of stealing my ideas. My advice to young writers is to get themselves an agent on their own, maybe through their college professors (as I got my first publishers through my prof Mark Van Doren) and do their own footwork, or "thing" as the slang goes... So the work-destroyers are nothing but certain *people*.

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The work-preservers are the solitudes of night, "when the whole wide world is fast asleep."

INTERVIEWER

What do you find the best time and place for writing?

KEROUAC

The desk in the room, near the bed, with a good light, midnight till dawn, a drink when you get tired, preferably at home, but if you have no home, make a home out of your hotel room or motel room or pad: peace. *(Picks up harmonica and plays)* Boy, can I play!

INTERVIEWER

What about writing under the influence of drugs?

KEROUAC

Poem 230 from *Mexico City Blues* is a poem written purely on morphine. Every line in this poem was written within an hour of one another...high on a big dose of M. *(Finds volume and reads)*

Love's multitudinous boneyard of decay
An hour later:
The spilled milk of heroes
An hour later:
Destruction of silk kerchiefs by dust storm,
An hour later:
Caress of heroes blindfolded to posts,
An hour later:
Murder victims admitted to this life,
An hour later:
Skeletons bartering fingers and joints,
An hour later:
The quivering meat of the elephants of kindness
being torn apart by vultures

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(See where Ginsberg stole that from me?)
An hour later: Conceptions of delicate kneecaps.
Say that, Saroyan.

SAROYAN

Conceptions of delicate kneecaps.

KEROUAC

Very good. Fear of rats dripping with bacteria. An hour later: Golgotha Cold Hope for Gold Hope. Say that.

SAROYAN

Golgotha Cold Hope for Cold Hope.

KEROUAC

That's pretty cold.
An hour later: Damp leaves of Autumn against the wood of boats,
An hour later: Seahorse's delicate imagery of glue...
Ever see a little seahorse in the ocean? They're built of glue... did you ever sniff a seahorse? No, say that.

SAROYAN

Seahorse's delicate imagery of glue.

KEROUAC

You'll do, Saroyan. Death by long exposure to defilement.

SAROYAN

Death by long exposure to defilement.

KEROUAC

Frightening ravishing mysterious beings concealing their sex.

SAROYAN

Frightening ravishing mysterious beings concealing their sex.

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KEROUAC

Pieces of the Buddha-material frozen and sliced
microscopically
In Morgues of the North

SAROYAN

Hey, I can't say that. Pieces of the Buddha-material frozen and sliced microscopically in Morgues of the North.

KEROUAC

Penis apples going to seed.

SAROYAN

Penis apples going to seed.

KEROUAC

The severed gullets more numerous than sands.

SAROYAN

The severed gullets more numerous than sands.

KEROUAC

Like kissing my kitten in the belly

SAROYAN

Like kissing my kitten in the belly

KEROUAC

The softness of our reward

SAROYAN

The softness of our reward.

KEROUAC

Is he really William Saroyan's son? That's wonderful! Would you mind repeating that?

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INTERVIEWER

We should be asking you a lot of very straight serious questions. When did you meet Allen Ginsberg?

KEROUAC

First I met Claude.* And then I met Allen and then I met Burroughs. Claude came in through the fire escape...there were gunshots down in the alley—Pow! Pow! and it was raining, and my wife says, here comes Claude. And here comes this blond guy through the fire escape, all wet. I said, "What's this all about, what the hell is this?" He says, "They're chasing me." Next day in walks Allen Ginsberg carrying books. Sixteen years old with his ears sticking out. He says, "Well, discretion is the better part of valor!" I said, "Aw shutup. You little twitch." Then the next day here comes Burroughs wearing a seersucker suit, followed by the other guy.

INTERVIEWER

What other guy?

KEROUAC

It was the guy who wound up in the river. This was this guy from New Orleans that Claude killed and threw in the river. Stabbed him twelve times in the heart with a Boy Scout knife.

When Claude was fourteen he was the most beautiful blond boy in New Orleans. And he joined the Boy Scout troop... and the Boy Scout Master was a big redheaded fairy who went to school at St. Louis University, I think it was.

And he had already been in love with a guy who looked just like Claude in Paris. And this guy chased Claude all over the country; this guy had him thrown out of Baldwin, Tulane, and Andover Prep.... It's a queer tale, but Claude isn't a queer.

INTERVIEWER

What about the influence of Ginsberg and Burroughs? Did

* "Claude," a pseudonym, is also used in *Vanity of Duluoz.*

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you ever have any sense then of the mark the three of you would have on American writing?

KEROUAC

I was determined to be a "great writer," in quotes, like Thomas Wolfe, see...Allen was always reading and writing poetry...Burroughs read a lot and walked around looking at things.... The influence we exerted on one another has been written about over and over again... We were just three interested characters, in the interesting big city of New York, around campuses, libraries, cafeterias. A lot of the details you'll find in *Vanity*...in *On the Road* where Burroughs is Bull Lee and Ginsberg is Carlo Marx...in *Subterraneans*, where they're Frank Carmody and Adam Moorad respectively, elsewhere. In other words, though I don't want to be rude to you for this honor, I am so busy interviewing myself in my novels, and have been so busy writing down these self-interviews, that I don't see why I should draw breath in pain every year of the last ten years to repeat and repeat to everybody who interviews me what I've already explained in the books themselves.... (Hundreds of journalists, thousands of students.) It beggars sense. And it's not that important. It's our work that counts, if anything at all, and I'm not proud of mine or theirs or anybody's since Thoreau and others like that, maybe because it's still too close to home for comfort. Notoriety and public confession in literary form is a frazzler of the heart you were born with, believe me.

INTERVIEWER

Allen said once that he learned how to read Shakespeare, that he never did understand Shakespeare until he heard you read Shakespeare to him.

KEROUAC

Because in a previous lifetime that's who I was.

How like a Winter hath my absence been from thee?
The pleasure of the fleeting year...what freezings
have I felt? What dark days seen? Yet Summer with his

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lord surcease hath laid a big turd in my orchard
And one hog after another comes to eat
and break my broken mountain trap, and my mousetrap
too! And here to end the sonnet, you must make sure
to say, tara-tara-tara.....!!!!!!

INTERVIEWER

Is that spontaneous composition?

KEROUAC

Well, the first part was Shakespeare...and the second part was...

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever written any sonnets?

KEROUAC

I'll give you a spontaneous sonnet. It has to be what, now?

INTERVIEWER

Fourteen lines.

KEROUAC

That's twelve lines with two dragging lines. That's where you bring up your heavy artillery.

Here the fish of Scotland seen your eye
and all my nets did creak...

Does it have to rhyme?

INTERVIEWER

No.

KEROUAC

My poor chapped hands fall awry
and seen the Pope, his devilled eye.
And maniacs with wild hair hanging about my room
and listening to my tomb
which does not rhyme.

Seven lines?

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INTERVIEWER

That was eight lines.

KEROUAC

And all the orgones of the earth will crawl
like dogs across the graves of Peru
and Scotland too.

That's ten.

Yet do not worry, sweet angel of mine
That hast thine inheritance
imbedded in mine.

INTERVIEWER

That's pretty good, Jack. How did you do that?

KEROUAC

Without studying dactyls...like Ginsberg...I met Ginsberg ...I'd hitchhiked all the way back from Mexico City to Berkeley, and that's a long way baby, a long way. Mexico City across Durango...Chihuahua... Texas. I go back to Ginsberg, I go to his cottage, I say, "Hah, we're gonna play the music" ...he says, "You know what I'm going to do tomorrow? I'm going to throw on Mark Schorer's desk a new theory of prosody! About the dactyllic arrangements of Ovid!" *(Laughter)*

I said, "Quit, man. Sit under a tree and forget it and drink wine with me...and Phil Whalen and Gary Snyder and all the bums of San Francisco. Don't you try to be a big Berkeley teacher. Just be a poet under the trees... and we'll wrestle and we'll break holds." And he did take my advice. He remembered that. He said, "What are you going to teach...you have parched lips!" I said, "Naturally, I just came from Chihuahua. It's very hot down there, phew! you go out and little pigs rub against your legs. Phew!"

So here comes Snyder with a bottle of wine...and here comes Whalen, and here comes what's his name...Rexroth... and everybody...and we had the poetry renaissance of San Francisco.

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INTERVIEWER

What about Allen getting kicked out of Columbia? Didn't you have something to do with that?

KEROUAC

Oh, no...he let me sleep in his room. He was not kicked out of Columbia for that. The first time he let me sleep in his room, and the guy that slept in our room with us was Lancaster who was descended from the White Roses or Red Roses of England. But a guy came in...the guy that ran the floor and he thought that I was trying to make Allen, and Allen had already written in the paper that I wasn't sleeping there because I was trying to make him, but he was trying to make me. But we were just actually sleeping. Then after that he got a pad...he got some stolen goods in there...and he got some thieves up there, Vicky and Huncke. And they were all busted for stolen goods, and a car turned over, and Allen's glasses broke, it's all in John Holmes' *Go*.

Allen Ginsberg asked me when he was nineteen years old, should I change my name to Allen Renard? You change your name to Allen Renard I'll kick you right in the balls! Stick to Ginsberg...and he did. That's one thing I like about Allen. Allen *Renard!!!*

INTERVIEWER

What was it that brought all of you together in the 50's? What was it that seemed to unify the "Beat Generation?"

KEROUAC

Oh the beat generation was just a phrase I used in the 1951 written manuscript of *On the Road* to describe guys like Moriarty who run around the country in cars looking for odd jobs, girlfriends, kicks. It was thereafter picked up by West Coast leftist groups and turned into a meaning like "beat mutiny" and "beat insurrection" and all that nonsense; they just wanted some youth movement to grab onto for their own political and social purposes. I had nothing to do with any of

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that. I was a football player, a scholarship college student, a merchant seaman, a railroad brakeman on road freights, a script synopsizer, a secretary... And Moriarty-Cassady was an actual cowboy on Dave Uhl's ranch in New Raymer Colorado... What kind of beatnik is that?

INTERVIEWER

Was there any sense of "community" among the Beat crowd?

KEROUAC

That community feeling was largely inspired by the same characters I mentioned, like Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg; they are very socialistically minded and want everybody to live in some kind of frenetic kibbutz, solidarity and all that. I was a loner. Snyder is not like Whalen, Whalen is not like McClure, I am not like McClure, McClure is not like Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg is not like Ferlinghetti, but we all had fun over wine anyway. We knew thousands of poets and painters and jazz musicians. There's no "beat crowd" like you say...what about Scott Fitzerald and his "lost crowd," does that sound right? Or Goethe and his "Wilhelm Meister crowd?" The subject is such a bore. Pass me that glass.

INTERVIEWER

Well, why did they split in the early 60's?

KEROUAC

Ginsberg got interested in left wing politics...like Joyce I say, as Joyce said to Ezra Pound in the 1920's, "Don't bother me with politics, the only thing that interests me is style." Besides I'm bored with the new avant-garde and the skyrocketing sensationalism. I'm reading Blaise Pascal and taking notes on religion. I like to hang around now with nonintellectuals, as you might call them, and not have my mind proselytized, ad infinitum. They've even started crucifying chickens in happenings, what's the next step? An actual crucifixion of a man... The beat group dispersed as you say in the early

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60's, all went their own way, and this is my way: home life, as in the beginning, with a little toot once in a while in local bars.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of what they're up to now? Allen's radical political involvement? Burrough's cut-up methods?

KEROUAC

I'm pro-American and the radical political involvements seem to tend elsewhere... The country gave my Canadian family a good break, more or less, and we see no reason to demean said country. As for Burroughs' cut-up method, I wish he'd get back to those awfully funny stories of his he used to write and those marvelously dry vignettes in *Naked Lunch*. Cut-up is nothing new, in fact that steeltrap brain of mine does a lot of cutting up as it goes along...as does everyone's brain while talking or thinking or writing... It's just an old Dada trick, and a kind of literary collage. He comes out with some great effects though. I like him to be elegant and logical and that's why I don't like the cut-up which is supposed to teach us that the mind is cracked. Sure the mind's cracked, as anybody can see in a hallucinated high, but how about an explanation of the crackedness that can be understood in a workaday moment?

INTERVIEWER

What do you think about the hippies and the LSD scene?

KEROUAC

They're already changing, I shouldn't be able to make a judgment. And they're not all of the same mind. The Diggers are different... I don't know one hippie anyhow... I think they think I'm a truckdriver. And I am. As for LSD, it's bad for people with incidence of heart disease in the family. *(Knocks microphone off footstool...recovers it)*

Is there any reason why you can see anything good in this yere mortality?

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INTERVIEWER

Excuse me, would you mind repeating that?

KEROUAC

You said you had a little white beard in your belly. Why is there a little white beard in your mortality belly?

INTERVIEWER

Let me think about it. Actually it's a little white pill.

KEROUAC

A little white pill?

INTERVIEWER

It's good.

KEROUAC

Give me.

INTERVIEWER

We should wait till the scene cools a little.

KEROUAC

Right. This little white pill is a little white beard in your mortality which advises you and ad-vertises to you that you will be growing long fingernails in the graves of Peru.

SAROYAN

Do you feel middle-aged?

KEROUAC

No. Listen, we're coming to the end of the tape. I want to add something on. Ask me what Kerouac means.

INTERVIEWER

Jack, tell me again what Kerouac means.

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KEROUAC

Now, Kairn. K (or C) A-I-R-N. What is a kairn? It's a heap of stones. Now Cornwall, kairn-wall. Now, right, kern, also K-E-R-N, means the same thing as Kairn, Kern, Kairn. Ouac means language of. So, Kernuac means the language of Cornwall. Kerr, which is like Deborah Kerr... ouack means language of the water. Because Kerr, Carr, etc., means water. And Kairn means heap of stones. There is no language in a heap of stones. Kerouac. Ker-water, ouac-language of. And it's related to the old Irish name, Kerwick, which is a corruption. And it's a Cornish name, which in itself means Kairnish. And according to Sherlock Holmes, it's all Persian. Of course you know he's not Persian. Don't you remember in Sherlock Holmes when he went down with Dr. Watson and solved the case down in old Cornwall and he solved the case and then he said, "Watson, the needle! Watson, the needle..." He said, "I've solved this case here in Cornwall. Now I have the liberty to sit around here and decide and read books, which will prove to me... why the Cornish people, otherwise known as the Kernuaks, or Kerouacs, are of Persian origin. The enterprise which I am about to embark upon," he then said, after he got his shot, "is fraught with eminent peril, and not fit for a lady of your tender years." Remember that?

MC NAUGHTON

I remember that.

KEROUAC

McNaughton remembers that. McNaughton. You think I would forget the name of a Scotsman?

—TED BERRIGAN

THE PARIS REVIEW was given a 1968 George Polk Memorial Award for distinguished achievement in journalism for its Interview Series.

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Bernadette Mayer

Corn

Corn is a small hard seed.

Corn from Delft
Is good for elves.

white corn, yellow, Indian

Is this kernel a kernel of corn?

The corn they sought
Was sown by night.

The Corn Islands are two small islands,
Little Corn Island and Great Corn Island,
on an interoceanic canal route.

Any of several
insects that bore in maize is a corn borer.

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Wind Force

Sea like a mirror.

One. Ripples with the appearance of scales formed, but without foam crests.

Two. Light. Small wavelets, short but pronounced; crests appear glassy, do not break.

Three. Gentle. Large wavelets with crests beginning to break; foam appears glassy. Perhaps scattered white horses (white foam crests).

Four. Moderate. Small waves, becoming longer; fairly frequent white horses...

Five. Fresh. Moderate waves of a pronounced long form; many white horses, possibly some spray.

Six. Large waves begin to form; white foam crests more extensive everywhere; probably some spray.

Seven. Strong. Sea heaps up; some white foam from breaking waves blows in streaks along the direction of the wind.

Eight. Moderately high waves. Edges of crests begin to break into spindrift. Well-marked streaks of foam blow along direction of wind.

Nine. Gale. High waves. Dense streaks of foam along direction of wind. Spray may affect visibility.

Ten. Very high waves with long overhanging crests; great patches of foam blown in dense white streaks along direction of wind. Sea surface takes on a white appearance. Visibility affected.

Eleven. Whole Gale. Exceptionally high waves; sea completely covered with long white patches of foam lying along direction of wind; edges of wave crests everywhere blown into froth. Visibility affected.

Twelve or more. Hurricane. Air filled with foam and spray; sea completely white with driving spray. Visibility very seriously affected.

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Vito Hannibal Acconci

Using a Trot

He said: "Straight from the horse's mouth."
He said that was straight from the horse's mouth.
He said it straight from the horse's mouth.
The horse was large, strong, with four legs, solid hoofs, and flowing mane and tail.
(Something like it was what he sat, rode, or was carried on.
There was a frame on legs to support something.)
And something or other was uttered through the mouth, which contained the teeth and the tongue.
There was a wry expression!
There, the water emptied into another body of water.
The body, then, developed by means of food.
He had been mentioned before.
Now, not bent or crooked, he was coming out of the opening.
He was no longer on his high horse.

The Red and the Yellow and the Blue Men

First, they get up, and they take these ups and downs in stride. And then, second, they stride over to what they hit. And then, third, they hit it off together. And then—

The first to get in on this is the orange man, who pours. And so, second of all, the green man comes in and will grow out of it, before long. And so on, while the purple man drops by and interrupts by saying he has been born to this, he has to, he had, once.

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Lewis Warsh

Poem

A layer of snow makes me forget
Spring is just around the corner just don't
Think of me walking out into the cold
With one arm free, another drawing moving
Across the sky, in my own wet shoes, this morning

The heat at my feet made me blue I see a clock
Under it sculpture three Puerto Rican kids
Are turning in Cooper Square barber's scissors clipping
The air I breathe disperses the luxury of it being tomorrow
For anyone who cares to remember us now, then

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Anne Waldman

Warming Up

to Kenneth Koch

It's so cold in here I can't do anything

All night on the phone talking to cold people
who remind you how cold you are

It's pretty boring

But then freezing brings us all together

Like the death of someone you know and love
or the almost death

depending how it looks to you

Pretty convincing!

when someone's holding a gun to your forehead

That's certainly not boring

In fact, it might even stir you to action!

I think I'll just stay frozen a while until this moment passes.

There, it's gone.

But it's still pretty cold in here

I've even turned on the oven

Some people I know don't even have an oven

Think of that!

Some people don't even have heat

Like dead people.

We get heat sometimes when the landlady's cold,

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which doesn't seem to be right now, 1 A.M.

Maybe she's dead!

I think I'll give her a call.

No, I don't think I will.

I'll just sit here and think about California, or Rome
or some other pretty hot places I've been.

New York City can get pretty hot, come to think of it

So hot sometimes you're wishing for winter

And here it is!

Airplanes

Airplanes take us where we're going and leave us there,
then take off for parts unknown on their own.

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Francis Ponge

Soap

If I rub my hands with it, soap foams, exults...
The more complaisant it makes them, supple,
Smooth, docile, the more it slobbers, the more
Its rage becomes voluminous, pearly...
Magic stone!
The more it forms with air and water
Clusters of scented grapes,
Explosive...
Water, air and soap
Overlap, play
At leapfrog, forming
Combinations less chemical than
Physical, gymnastical, acrobatical,
Rhetorical?

There is much to say about soap. Precisely everything that it tells about itself until the complete disappearance, the exhaustion of the subject. This is just the object suited to me.

*

Soap has much to say. May it say it with volubility, enthusiasm. When it has finished saying it, it no longer is.

*

Soap was made by man for his body's use, yet it does not willingly attend him. This inert stone is nearly as hard to hold as a fish. See it slip from me and like a frog dive into the basin again...emitting also at its own expense a blue cloud of evanescence, of confusion.

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*

For a piece of soap the principal virtues are enthusiasm and volubility. At any rate ease of elocution. This, which is excessively simple, has nonetheless never been said. Even by the specialists in commercial publicity. And what do the soap-manufacturers offer me?—not a penny! They have never even thought of it! Yet soap and I will show them what we can do...

*

There is nothing in nature comparable to soap. No stone is so modest nor, at the same time, so magnificent.

To be frank, there is something adorable about its personality. Its behavior is inimitable.

It begins with perfect reserve.

Soap displays at first perfect self-control, though more or less discreetly scented. Then, as soon as one occupies oneself with it, I won't say what fire, of course, but what magnificent élan! What utter enthusiasm in the gift of itself! What generosity! What volubility, almost inexhaustible, unimaginable!

One may, besides, soon be done with it, yet this adventure, this brief encounter leaves you—this is what is sublime—with hands as clean as you've ever had.

*

Because of this object's qualities I must expatiate a little, make it froth before your eyes.

*

Violent desire to wash one's hands.

Dear reader, I suppose that you sometimes want to wash your hands?

For your intellectual toilet, reader, here is a text on soap.

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*

This egg, this flat
dab—this little
almond, which
grows so quickly
(almost instantly)
into a Chinese fish
With its veils and kimonos
and wide sleeves
Thus it celebrates its marriage
with water. Such is the gown of its marriage with water.

*

One would never be through,
with soap!

...Yet it is necessary to return it to its saucer, to its strict appearance, its austere oval, its dry patience, and its power to serve again.

*

It is known that one cannot clean oneself properly with simple water. Even if one stood under the purest torrents. Or in the silence of the darkest and coldest source, where the temptation might occur to you, o absolute young man, of drowning yourself. Even if one dove down the well of truth, no! None of this is enough to make the dirt on the skin so much as raise its eyebrows. Thus, living under the pump is good for nothing, with the risk of hiccupping your way from life into death. And I will only cite for the sake of completeness the most obsolete solution, which is to immerse oneself up to the waist, arms folded, in some dull tributary of the Dead Sea (in water that flows towards the Dead Sea) burbling some prayer-bubbles, while touching with two moistened fingers one's forehead, navel, and nipples.

Speak to me rather of the smallest washbowl, the least scrap of soap!

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PRELUDE
to
SOAP

For the toilet of the mind, a little piece of soap. Well handled is enough. Where torrents of simple water would clean nothing. Nor silence. Nor your suicide in the darkest source, o absolute reader.

Living under the pump is good for nothing. Except hiccups. And the triumph of the absurd in this case, is it not to stand waist-deep in water that flees towards the Dead Sea, arms folded.

Believe me, the smallest bowl would be better... But look at him, now, under the faucet gushing with impatience to loosen the dry tongue of the soap.

*

The text immediately preceding this, recited slowly, that is to say, as carefully as it was written, seemed to me sufficiently complete to send to my two best friends at that time, Albert Camus and Jean Paulhan.

From Paulhan, no answer. But from Camus, I soon received this:

*

Extract from a letter of Albert Camus:

"As for *soap*, your intentions escape me slightly, whereas usually they are *very clear* to me. There may be an excessive ellipse; I don't really understand. Perhaps, without sacrificing anything essential, you might supple the hinges a little, oil the conjunctions. Nevertheless, the text is not to be changed. But you see it more clearly than I do. This raises a great problem, besides. To my mind, control is not achieved without an occasional abandon. Your abandon has generally been irony. Yet irony is an ellipse also. And it is for this reason that the

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reading of your texts gives the reader the impression that one has violated his sensibility, escarped his intelligence, that one was right to. 'One', it's you.

"But the *Twelve Little Writings* allowed me to see in you a very different abandon, which I would like to see reappear now and then (this is why I like above all *The Stone* or your pieces on trees). Of course, I say 'now and then', because the essential of your art is not that. It is that which you choose to do, and which you do to perfection."

★

The silence of Paulhan, the reserves of Camus gave me much to think about, and I gradually came to conceive, so as to make my intentions clearer, as clear as possible, yet changing nothing in the text which was to my satisfaction, adding nothing, *not the least phrase, not the least word, of a sort of distribution of this text, by which I mean the various propositions (in the grammatical sense) of which it was made up.*

A sort of distribution, in the sense that a stage-manager (what you others call the director*) distributes the* text, *which he has the job of making a play, among separate voices, separate characters.*

I insist on the fact that my text *itself was to be in no way modified. It was only a question of staging.*

And here is what I ended with, by the beginning of summer 1944.

Camus, who was much engaged in theater then, and whom I had informed of my intentions by correspondence (since he was then in Paris where he helped, for example, in the staging and private performance of Picasso's The Devil Caught By The Tail*) urged me to get this little Soap play ready. But I did not have the leisure, when I had finished it, in the state in which France found itself then (the beginning of summer 1944), to send it to him.*

Here, then, is what I ended with, for myself alone:

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SOAP

Characters

FIRST CHIMNEYSWEEP
SECOND CHIMNEYSWEEP
LITTLE CHIMNEYSWEEP (doesn't speak)
TYPIST
THE ABSOLUTE READER
THE ABBÉ JEAN-BAPTISTE GRIBOUILLE
FIRST PHILOSOPHER
SECOND PHILOSOPHER
THE POET

The scene represents a courtyard adjacent to the park of a large house. In it there is a pool, or fairly deep spring, with dark water, flowing in a stream into the park.

Beneath a corbel in the wall of the house, at ground-floor level, a washstand: a faucet, a bowl, a saucer with a piece of soap, Turkish towel. A pump is nearby. An iron table.

In the foreground a sloping lawn, with scattered rocks. On the rock nearest the spectator, to the right, a typewriter.

It is warm and stormy. Dust.

As the curtain rises, the chimneysweeps (two men and a small boy) are leaving the house. They make gestures to brush off the soot that coats them, passing their hands over their faces in a listless way. But evidently satisfied with the work they have just done. Looking up at the roofs and chimneys. Happy also to be through.

At the same time a group seated on the rocks or lawn begins to break up. It comprises the Poet, the Absolute Reader, the two Philosophers and the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Gribouille. Each holds a book or papers. It is clear that they have just been discussing something, and their gestures resemble those of the chimneysweeps. They shake themselves, adjust their clothing, smooth their hair or beard, but their faces suggest discontent rather than fatigue. They walk back and

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forth behind the typist, sitting near a rock in front of her typewriter, which she has just covered again in its black oilcloth. They bend over the sheets that have just been taken out with a dissatisified air and, after a while, agree to have the typist destroy them. The Poet, in getting up, had left his papers behind. The Reader, more abruptly, had thrown down his book and gone towards the spring to bend over it with a sombre air.

Meanwhile, the chimneysweeps have been approaching the wash-stand. The Poet follows them with his eye. Suddenly, he goes towards them, reaches the stand before them and, grabbing one of the pieces of soap, turns towards the others (and the public), and in a tone of voice at once inspired and questioning (and mocking) says:

THE POET

For the toilet of the mind, a little piece of soap?...

FIRST CHIMNEYSWEEP

Well handled is enough...

(The young chimneysweep is already under the pump, working it.)

FIRST PHILOSOPHER *(pointing to the small boy)*

Where torrents of simple water...

SECOND CHIMNEYSWEEP *(chasing the small boy)*

Would clean nothing...

THE ABSOLUTE READER *(bent over the spring)*

Nor silence...

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SECOND PHILOSOPHER

Nor your suicide in the darkest source, o Absolute Reader!

(Thunder)

(The Abbé Jean-Baptiste Gribouille seems seized by a holy illumination. He points to the sky with a prophetic finger, takes a statuette of Saint Sulpice from his soutane, sets it on the table, adores it, crosses himself several times and goes to kneel beneath the pump, his hands clasped. No water comes out of the pump.)
(The sun shines.)

FIRST CHIMNEYSWEEP

Living under the pump is good for nothing...

(The Abbé says something inaudibly.)

SECOND CHIMNEYSWEEP

Except hiccups.
(The Abbé raises his head, sees that there is no water, yet he has lost none of his assurance: he walks slowly, like a somnambulist, towards the spring, in which he immerses himself up to the waist, arms folded on his chest, gazing at the sky, as if for the Baptism in the Jordan. He will remain in this pose until the end of the act.)

FIRST PHILOSOPHER

The triumph of the absurd in this case, is it not...

SECOND PHILOSOPHER

To stand waist-deep...

FIRST CHIMNEYSWEEP

Arms folded!...

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SECOND PHILOSOPHER

In water that flees towards the Dead Sea...

SECOND CHIMNEYSWEEP

Believe me, the smallest bowl would be better...

(The young boy has turned on the faucet, which has already filled the bowl.)

FIRST PHILOSOPHER *(to the Poet)*

But look at him, now, under the faucet gushing with impatience...

SECOND PHILOSOPHER

To loosen the dry tongue of the soap.

THE ABSOLUTE READER

(brusquely, pointing to the statuette on the iron table)

Remove this God! Bring the table and bowl here!

(The chimneysweeps place the table in the foreground, take away the statuette, replacing it with a bowl full of water and the saucer with its piece of soap.) (To the Poet)

Let the soap speak!

The Poet comes forward, takes the piece of soap and prepares to declaim while washing his hands. The chimneysweeps, having returned to the background, are by the pump, taking off their jackets. During the entire declamation they will be soaping their bare torsos under the pump with a big piece of very frothy soap, washing the little boy as well. The Typist removes the covering from her

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machine and, as the Poet is about to speak, sheds her dress in a single movement, appearing naked (or in a bathing suit). The Absolute Reader leaves the railing of the spring and goes to stand behind the Typist to follow the declamation as she blackens the sheets with it. The Philosophers are seated or leaning on their elbows, listening.

The Abbé will remain motionless in the spring, in his attitude of expectant prayer.

(End of THE PRELUDE)

During the declamation which is about to follow, there will be background music, low, not at all lively but severe, rigorously contrapuntal, inspired by the sound of typewriters. In fact, this will continue throughout. At times there will also be a noise like a book's page being turned...

From the back of the theater a very bright projected ray of light, illuminating from floor to ceiling, will then throw the shadow of the typewriter's roller onto a screen replacing the backdrop. On this screen, that will seem the projection of the sheet in the typewriter's roller, the text of the poem, as it is declaimed, will appear cinematically.

It's then that the declamation of the poem proper, of which I shall give you an idea in a minute, would begin, and at the end of which would occur the brief final scene:

CODA in Dialogue

THE POET *(ending his declamation)*

...One would never be through with soap. Yet it is necessary to return it to its austere oval, and its power to serve again.

(He puts the piece of soap in its saucer.)

THE TWO PHILOSOPHERS *(in chorus)*

If he has wished to prove that purity is not obtained by silence, but by any exercise of language (in certain conditions),

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followed by a sudden catastrophe of fresh water, he would not have argued otherwise.

THE ABBÉ J.-B. GRIBOUILLE

(Remaining waist-deep in the spring, when the philosophers say the word "argued" he says in chorus with them in the same tone of voice)

Prophesied...

(then makes the sign of the Cross, but doubtless the waters of the Jordan are dirty because, touching his forehead, he leaves a black spot there.)

THE CHIMNEYSWEEPS *(in chorus)*

(They are white and bright, thoroughly clean, radiant and, at the same time as the Philosophers' "argued" and the Abbé's "prophesied," say)

Was anything better than soap?

THE POET

(Before the curtain starts to fall, he approaches the Absolute Reader who, remaining behind the Typist, has been snatching the sheets out of the typewriter and reading them close to his eyes—takes his arm and leads him towards the exit, saying)

But if I had failed, would you perhaps find that I had stained you with ink instead?

CURTAIN

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DRY SOAP BEFORE USE

To take it in its saucer, the simplest, sometimes the most damaged in the house, at first it will say nothing to you, the amorphous, stubborn egg, the stone or mediocre puck, at which only your nose is surprised, to find it a little more strongly scented, a little more strangely also, than a stone by the fatigue of flowers.

It will say nothing to you...
It is up to me, in fact, while it reserves itself for the festivities at hand, to talk to you about the taciturn state of our object.

And should I only talk about it briefly, with the pretext that it concerns a state of taciturnity? No, because then there would be no reason to talk about it at all. No, not if we are to repay it for its long patience between periods of use.

But how will I talk about it, then? Not loquaciously, of course, as it is not yet time for such festivities. But simply, after having detached it with difficulty from its saucer, to turn it over in our hands. Nevertheless, the kind of hardness it proposes to us already justifies, perhaps, a less rigorous way of speaking, less abrupt. Yet it will still be necessary that each phrase, based on a concrete expression of its reality, be valid for it alone, mean nothing in regard to any other object. Finally, that one always smell it on one's hands, i.e., that its perfume, more or less vulgar, persist until the end of the discourse, and not leave these hands while they are writing, that it immediately reach as far as you, dear Reader.

But isn't this too much talk to say nothing? Doubtless it needed to be turned over in our hands some more, while saying nothing as yet itself...

Yet impregnated as we already are, not only with its smell but with other qualities (and even with some tiny particles

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of its substance) which it leaves on the hands when touched, we may soon be in a position to state (even before appreciating or understanding) the serious, profound reasons for its behavior.

Let's say that the particular kind of hardness (slightly malleable) and silence (like a verbal reserve) finally the sort of taciturnity it proposes to us, seems to us to be the sign of a dramatic inner conflict. In other words, that its appearance reveals a painfully achieved compromise—and, it seems, constantly regained as it is constantly lost again—between the temptation to endure, to conserve itself, to eternize itself, even, in an ever more perfect silence and dryness (the finished type of this perfection represented, if you like, by the stone)—and the feeling, on the other hand, that this is neither its duty nor, considered and honestly judged, its nature, its real end, which is rather that it be used, at the same time, of course, as it rejoices, enjoys—to be used, I say, and to lose itself in its function, its service and, finally, to fulfill its usefulness.

For soap is meant to be a useful object, and is unable and unwilling to forget its duty. It is, at each minute—in its very silence—capable of words and like a face about to speak.

Yes! Let us examine it and we will be touched to see, on its face, the signs of this dramatic compromise. While its inaction hardens it, conserves it, its passion for water gives it a dry tongue. Its forehead darkens, wrinkles. The anxiety of inaction cracks it. And certainly, it never conserves itself better than when it's inactive, forgotten. Yet it is bound, at the same time, to conserve all its parts in all their qualities. Also, it protects itself with no differentiated tegument, forms no crust, shell, bark or skin, and only reluctantly does it share in this dryness that is its health, neither dedicating nor sacrificing entirely to it any of its parts, which would then no longer be good for anything. For, although it has one and is well aware of it, it does not have to protect in itself the delicate mechanism of an existence or an autonomous principle—without other use or justification than the conservation and perpetuation of this existence, this principle, that is to say its way of occupying and dividing Time. It has nothing to maintain save a complex

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of qualities or, rather, well-defined faculties proper to its function: it has only to remain adequate to its use—and there, certainly, is a lesson.

Nor does it modify in any way its form. No exterior defences. No hedgehogs, no spikes. No advanced works. Neither in its form, nor in any of the essential qualities of its substance, does its silence, its solitude, its will to endure by not speaking result in any real (definitive) change. No, it remains homogenous and is completely intact—a single block—as it simply contracts, gathers itself, summons its parts to its center.

Yet, at the same time, it can do no more than remain amenable, attractive, supple, polite. And of these qualities it can only hold the reins, shorter and shorter, during inaction. This is all that it can do. Thus showing (willy-nilly) that it is not so much afraid of a new service, a new summons, or mobilization, as it awaits it, prepares itself for it, desires to be easily picked up again, to give an amenable, polite welcome to it, in no way harsh. It is in this way also that it gathers itself for its subsequent fantastic leaps.

All this is due to the oil of which it is made and which is the basis of its qualities. What to do with it? It can't evaporate it: this is not at all in the oil's nature. It can only parcel it out in smaller and smaller vials. In more and more vials, with less oil in each. As when one arranges, in one's medicine cabinet, the bottles tightly ranged in rows. All perfectly stored in the form of an egg or puck easy to grasp and not unpleasant to touch, although weighing a bit too lightly, perhaps, in the hand (and may you not want to throw it away, but rather vex it, make it *give up*, evince other qualities in place of weight).

And let's say that in composing and playing this so complex and difficult role, well, that it succeeds perfectly. As soon as it has been returned to its saucer, it sets about not merely contracting, so as to maintain a maximum power to serve again, but contracting in exactly that form in which its last service left it, because it assumes that this is the form in which it will be most easily mobilized again, which will make for the most pleasure and convenience in handling.

Thus soap now appears in its true light, in relation to the

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stone. Solid, serious, austere, slightly yet tenaciously scented, it certainly experiences the temptation to turn into that stone, which may appear to it as its perfect state. But it is not at all permitted to achieve this. It is made of oil, the basis of its qualities. Soap is a useful object. It has its qualities. It has its inner conflict, for it never forgets its duty, its destiny.

Here, then, is a very sensitive person. As sensitive to the dryness that wrinkles and cracks its forehead as to the water whose effects on it we shall soon see.

And surely it is magnificent, given its faults, vices, and weaknesses, and despite its practical qualities unknown to the stone which, however slightly, may be likened to it on account of the bearing, the reserve, the discretion, the patience, the dignity, and the incorruptibility in air which it displays. Also wouldn't it be just to systematically oppose them, commending the Cornelian severity of the stone, and dealing with soap as a facile stone, servile, soft, domestic and not weighing much? All the better to take account of the practical qualities we have noted in it, which are unknown to the stone: this sociability, usefulness, amiability in the hand, this faithful and persistent adequation to what is expected of it. For all that, it is nearly as incorruptible in air and, kept dry, I don't think it would yield anything in longevity...

Certainly, it seems to me that this is to its honor. But I must now deal with

THE SPONTANEOUS CONFUSION OF SOAP IN STILL WATER

For in water, it will be objected, what inferiority! It melts before the eye, vanishes almost at once. In this milieu, in fact, it seems to prove its obvious inferiority.... Nevertheless, let's look more closely.

Here again, I don't think that pejorative expressions can be advanced with any justice or reason. To be frank, I laugh, on

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the contrary, in advance at your confusion—when you will attentively observe the soap's confusion in the liquid—because then you will feel your own inferiority in the air of time and the serum of eternal causes. And perhaps you can already guess the use I will make of this, the brilliant piece of bravado during which, getting down at last to the proper function of soap, I will astonish you with the evidence of its, of my genius, and of the truth that it conveys. All the criticisms at the end of your tongue on the triviality of this subject, its affectedness, my banal way of dealing with it will be laughably disconcerted, will suddenly find themselves mocked by waves of dazzling light. But it is not yet time for this.

Let us observe, then, the soap's behavior at the bottom of a quantity of water when, forgetfully or inadvertently, its owner has left it there for the time being. Let us immediately note that it does not last well there, that it is defeated almost at once. But we should also, at almost the same time, note that even there it gives proof of a dignity peculiar enough to itself.

Rather than let itself be rolled about by the water, like pebbles, the natural stones, it prefers to instantly melt into it. And why, in fact, should it consent to pass its life in being unilaterally caressed by the waves. When it knows, is aware that it's part of a menage à trois, à trio, and does not play its part willingly, with brio, except in these conditions?

So much so that in a tête-à-tête with water, it does not interest itself in the question, lets itself be defeated with a perfect passivity, does not lend itself in the least to any game of friendly jostling, jolting, pokes.

Rather, it clings to the bottom and—how should I say it?—I won't say that it gives up the ghost, because it is its whole body that it lets disperse in trailing fumes, in fuliginous trails, slow in their movement and disappearance. Its whole body gives up the ghost in fumes that are slow to dissipate. Or rather, it gives up its body at the same time as its soul, and when it breathes its last, at the same time the last trace of its body has disappeared.

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Far, then, from letting itself be caressed by water, it prefers to melt into it, I have just said how. And I don't think that anyone in the world should remain indifferent to this. There is no reason to mistake it. Besides, the fact is that water, the original guilty one, soon learns the consequences. There it is, deeply troubled, in a relatively considerable amount. It has lost face and we see it deprived of the marvelous limpidity, the interior lucidity that is the usual reward of its clear conscience. Above all, the usual reward, if one considers it coldly, of its habit of usually banishing to its bottom or its surface the bodies that come to visit it; this is due to a unique density that protects enormous quantities of liquid.

Thus towards stones, say, water behaves with a sort of indifference or flippancy. Certainly it uses them up in the end, yet is not changed by them in any way. Its eyes remain as clear, as cold; it lets the particles or debris that it detaches or conquers from its victim drop immediately to its bottom. It instantly decants itself. Certainly, the war of water with stone is infinitely longer than with soap, but more difficult—can one say so? The water wages it carelessly, without interest or worrying about it, as if mechanically. It has many other things to do, accomplishes many other duties at the same time: it simultaneously carries on many other activities, other occupations: imperturbably. It cannot be, and never gives the impression that it is, beaten in this war, or seriously bothered. It is always, at each minute—though very slowly—victorious.

It is very difficult for it, however, to rid itself of soap, and the traces of its crime. The soap avenges itself for the humiliation it undergoes by intimately blending with the water, marrying itself to it in the most apparent way. This egg, this flat dab, this little almond quickly grows into a Chinese fish, with its veils, its kimonos and wide sleeves, and thus celebrates its marriage with water. It is then, during an impressively staged ceremony, that its confusion with water takes place, and the disappearance of its form into memory. (At the same time, all memory of dirtiness dissolves.) As for the water, it remains deeply troubled, moved. An enormous amount of it has, as I've said, lost face. It finds itself seriously punished for it. It

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will not succeed in ridding itself of the soap, and the traces of its crime, except by a considerable afflux of reinforcements brought up en masse, and by an agitation very significant of the emotion, the remorse it feels; except, finally, by quantity. Only by calling on its quantity. It is quantity, here, that drowns quality, makes it indistinct, proportionately (or relatively) indifferent, or insignificant. Insignificant, one was already too quick to say...

Now, let's take the soap out of the water and consider each of the two adversaries.

This one, shy, slipping away, fleeing, secret, heroic, disquietingly evasive...leading what is called a dissipated life... a bad boy because of its shyness and dignity. It circulates, flees, makes a thousand affected gestures, swathes itself in veils and finally prefers to dissolve, rather than let itself be caressed, unilaterally swallowed up by the water...

It happens that we have lost it and must gropingly fish it out again, very much diminished, half melted, softened up, bags under its eyes, unrecognizable, like someone who has "had it." Are we to regret this? Certainly not. We find it, as I say, smaller, diminished, exhausted sometimes, thin as it can be—yet with all dignity intact.

As for the other, an enormous amount troubled, having lost face...

Which one is the victor?

Etc...

SOAPY WATER AND SOAP BUBBLES

Saturated with soap, the water froths in the least movement. Wants to join the air, climbs in the assault of the sky. Grabs the air's arm, climbs the sky's knees... throws itself into the air's arms... throws itself on the sky's neck... Displays,

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even, a sort of aerostatic pretention. Displays a sort of exaltation, and even an aerostatic pretention. Sometimes achieves, in this respect, miraculous, brilliant, short-lived success.

It seems, at any rate, that its mood is made much more communicative by it. May it be communicated then! Intimately joined with soap, it will communicate it at the same time as itself.

...Yet always in a disorderly way, because always occasionally. Much more than a methodical desire, it concerns a disposition. A facility or faculty of elocution.

...We are nearly at this point. Saturated with our subject, not a word that doesn't evolve in various allusions. We have become capable of an unlimited succession of bubbles, which we release as they come to us, singly or in groups and not tampering with them: for we know that they will explode, I don't say merely at the least provocation, but at the least contact, and even at the least breath, or critical look—as also at the least exaggeration, exasperation of their inward vanity.

It happens that, in this adventure, we have lost the piece of soap itself, and that we have to gropingly fish it out again, very much diminished, half melted, softened up, bags under its eyes, unrecognizable, like someone who has "had it."

Shall we regret this?—Certainly not.

Our most successful bubbles, *our only successful bubbles*, are doubtless those that are the least worked. For can one work on a bubble? Surely not—unless (carefully) with the very breath that gives it birth.

It is only necessary to blow it with an even enough breath, with just the right pretentiousness, a movement of the soul at once measured and persistent, yet not too much so—until it detaches itself quasi-spontaneously from the pipe.

It is presence of mind that's required, at the moment of expiration... (of *breathation*).

Those bubbles that have been overly worked burst and fall in drops of water. And what vanity to want to remake them at all! There is only one solution: to blend them again with the liquid mass, to lose them there with no regret.

All this is much more, I think, than extended metaphors...

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These bubbles are beings in every (in their own) respect. Instructive in the highest degree. They rise in revolt from the earth, and take you with them. New qualities, unforeseen, until then unknown, ignored, are added to the known to constitute the perfection and particularity of a being-in-every-respect. Thus they escape being symbols. And their aspect changes. It no longer concerns an aspect of usefulness, or serviceability to man. Instead of their serving for something, it concerns a creation and no longer an explanation. There is something more in the conclusion than in the premises, because some premise was added which, mysteriously, managed to curl the sphere, completely curve it, and allowed it to detach itself and fly away.

And the feeling of happiness that their sight stirs in man is not deceptive: he is happy because he has *gained* something.

*

Here, then, are some of these bubbles which besides, for the most part, are innocent and unpremeditated.

For who—except by a rather infantile and old-fashioned game—while performing his intellectual toilet, would want to take a pipe and blow literary bubbles.

No, it only concerns soap and washing one's hands, like my ancestor Pontius Pilate, of whom I am so proud that having said "What is truth?" he should wash his hands of the death of the Just One (or the exalted one) and thus be the sole person in the story to enter history with clean hands, having done his duty without big gestures, big symbols, wailing and fatuity.

But after all, if I push the analysis further, it is much less a question of propelling bubbles myself than to prepare the liquid for you (or the solution, as one so aptly says), to tempt you with a saturation blending in which you may, after my example, exercise yourself (satisfy yourself) indefinitely, in your turn...

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RINSING

At this moment a new reflection occurs. It is necessary to end. The skin is puffy, although very clean. We have gotten what we wanted from the soap. And perhaps a little more, even.

Paragraph of fresh water. Rinsing a) the body b) the soap. It is put back in its saucer, returned to its austere oval and its power to serve again. Meanwhile the body is already engrossed in a new object: THE TURKISH TOWEL.

★

But that is another story altogether, which I will tell you some other time...

Translated by Lane Dunlop

"Soap" is a selection from Francis Ponge's *Le Savon*, © 1967 Editions Gallimard. Of the following texts by the same author, "The Peasant House" and "The Parabolic Heater" appeared in *Le Grand Recueil;* "The Shape of the World" in *Tome Premier;* "The Asparagus-fern" in *Nouveau Recueil.* All © Editions Gallimard.

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Francis Ponge

The Peasant House

I enter first through a stable, vast and dim where one barely sees in particular three rather big goats then a number of rough wood objects Rembrandt-brown: I find there a kind of wooden stairway by which I climb to my room that opens by the second door in the corridor, so in fact I do not sleep over the smell of the stable but above a living room occupied among other things by a clock whose frame touches the ceiling.

There is in the house an old woman of eighty-five, in her closet-bed (bed-cupboard) who will die in her life without having been sick, and her two daughters between forty and fifty years, exactly the same shape, rather short: the entire body of the oldest leaning to the left, while the second has a closed eye and the whole face wrinkles towards the other to try to close it as well.

Out of regard for me, their only boarder, they have placed their round table against the wall under my window, from which I can see the butt of a road on the left, and in front a short and high horizon, enhanced in the foreground by a cherry tree and further away by a field of broom (kind of gorse).

All of that violently trembles in a strong wind, like faggots.

At night, I am lit by candle, in this cabin of granite and pine. There is a strong wind which menaces and moans at the door, spitefully triumphs and streams through the leaves in front: a terrific round...

The window is open, the sky completely clear. Decorating it, stitches and embroideries, like a starry table cloth.

Neither the music of Pythagoras nor the appalling silence of Pascal; several things very close and very precise, as a spider might notice in the interior of his web when it has rained and the droplets at each crossing shine.

1927

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The Parabolic Heater

The whole of the nearly deserted neighborhood where I moved forward was but one of the monumental corners of the very high wall of the city with its tracery, pink in the setting sun.

On my left opened a street of low houses, dry and sordid but flooded by a ravishing light, half faded. At the corner stood, the post a bit askew, a sort of merry-go-round not much higher than a small pear tree, where several children turned, one of whom wore a sweater of pure lemon.

Music was heard as if made by several violins scraped in cadence, without tune.

Great events were in the air, impending, which belonged more to an intellectual or logical venture than to circumstances of a political or military order.

Expected at dinner by that writer, older than I, one of those princes of the literature of our time, I knew that he was going to tell me of an everlasting victory for our family of minds.

I was like a conqueror, escorted by that scraping of violins.

At the same time I felt on my face and hands heat as if from a sun low but very close, radiant, and I discovered suddenly that I was dreaming, since, deciding to wake up, I noticed I could no longer reopen my eyes.

Despite many efforts of the muscles of the eyelids, I did not succeed in raising them. Actually, as I understood later, I had mistaken the muscle: I acted on that of the eye itself, I showed the whites of the eyes under the lids.

This was beginning to become serious when abruptly, just as I had ceased my efforts for a moment, my eyelids half opened by themselves, and I saw the red hot spiral of the parabolic heater installed next to my armchair on a high pile of books, lighting me up.

I had fallen asleep, the pen in my fingers, holding in my other hand the writing board, on the blank page of which there was nothing left but to write the foregoing, with the title kept here for the end: "Feeling of victory at the decline of the day, and its fatal consequences."

1942

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The Shape of the World

I must, first of all, confess to a temptation absolutely entrancing, protracted, characteristic, irresistible for my mind.

It is to give to the world, to the collection of things that I see or that I imagine to be vision, not as most philosophers do and as is no doubt reasonable, the shape of a great sphere, a large pearl, soft and nebulous, as if misty, or on the contrary crystalline and limpid, in which, as one of them said, the center would be everywhere and the circumference nowhere; nor of a "geometry in space," an immeasurable chessboard; nor of a hive of innumerable alveolae in turn living and inhabited or dead and deconsecrated, as certain churches become barns or sheds, as certain shells, once connected to the mobile and wilful body of a mollusc, float emptied by death and only harbor water and a little fine gravel until the moment when a hermit crab chooses them for a dwelling and sticks on by the tail; nor even of an immense body of the same kind as the human body as one could also imagine it, finding in the planetary systems the equivalent of molecular systems and in drawing together the telescopic and microscopic.

But rather, in a way altogether arbitrary and in succession, the shape of the most particular things, the most asymmetrical and of contingent reputations (and not only the shape but all the characteristics, the peculiarities of color, of smell), as for example a branch of lilac, a shrimp in the natural aquarium of rocks at the end of the mole at Grau-du-Roi, a Turkish towel in my bathroom, a keyhole with a key in it.

And, no doubt, one has a right to make fun of it or in asylums take me to task, but there I find all my delight.

1928

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The Asparagus-fern

I see people who frown on digressions; I believe that those who make good use of them are like people who have long arms, they reach further.

Montesquieu

More dividedly even than in the cedar, I admire perhaps in the asparagus-fern its way of reaching a ceiling with each of its high stories, of offering to the greeting of light (or let us say rather to the soft landing of the planes of light) only the back of its hands at the height of suspended lips; of spreading so widely its generosity, its liberality, its bounty—that is to say not only the shadow that it provides, but its rains: fine rains, not only shadows but seeds... for each one of its branches is a long slender cloud, a broad cloud profiled—like those that are drawn out at the horizon on the plains at the hour of twilight, twilight in the east as well as the west, when the winds subside. Just as the long strings of violet freight cars come to a stop abandoned by their engines when they have returned to their round houses, their rose windows of stained glass, which take purple and smoke up: really the rose window of the winds, a bouquet of big anemones seen through the branches of cedars.

Thus the branches of the asparagus-fern propose for admiration the largest surface possible... Even more: both sides right hand left hand.

That which all trees strive to attain by contortion, they obtain very calmly.

O horizontal palms divided to an extreme! O roofs for the support of the most noble sentiments.

Marvelously leveled, these high-carpets-flying-in-place, gliding, these sparse lawns suspended...

Strata in air... These carpets, these sieves...

Flotillas of flat fish at a halt: sole, flounder, plaice...

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Flotillas of skeletal fish, fine frameworks made of skeletons of this kind of fish, immobile...

*

Take now the asparagus in a bouquet.

If perhaps, in fact, I prefer it to the cedar, it is because it enters the composition of those bouquets where roses, mimosas and all other branches of shrubs, displaying great ascending energy in a spiral and crowning themselves at the top with enormous, sensational, solemn and orgiastic flower festivals, appear as a result far more marvelous.

Yes, it is the asparagus-fern, by the contrast of its quiet, horizontal largesse that allows the maximum appreciation of the prodigious helicoidal resource of roses, the valor extending even to the dress of trumpets slashed at the tip of the stalk by the fierceness of the carnation's speech, the divinely fanciful dispersion of the hatching Pleiades of suns of the mimosa...

O shores of the Pacific, atolls where, in the high crystal volcanos of vases, shoot up, among the groves of palms, coconut trees.

*

That which we like even more, by contrast, in the mimosa where the tops are adjacent, is, from their suns (at the same time flowers and seeds) the impression of stock they give us: which will reseed, richly. Generously.

Here is what we like above all in flowers: paradoxically, their duration. The feeling they give of a power in time, disseminated in space. Their bombs-of-seeds aspect. The movement towards the future which that implies, and stirs up in the mind. Their aspect of bombs which will burst, the knowledge of their power, of their load of seed. This, at the same time glorious and touching, feeble, disarming. Their ephemeral bubble aspect, fireworks of specific or familial generosity, releasers of possibles, promises of generations...

O the vertiginous speed of the ascending helicoidal race of roses (and all other boughs and branches), to provoke here and there certain knots, where grains for success will be included,

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include themselves, where the sheltered life closes itself in (will cloister itself). Hence this endless twist... line of compromise between desire and awkwardness (due precisely to the speed of the thrust, to the violence of desire)... that twist, to untwist afterwards—that which one calls blossoming—and let go their seeds, new knots, etc.

This is how most plants grow, putting confidence in the virtues of speed, violence and, properly speaking, the precipitation of desire, to form those knots, impediments, brilliant bottle-necks where the seeds will materialize.

Thus dervishes spin, thus certain dancers. Likewise tongues turn in mouths, words are fashioned...

And it is then (here again the asparagus-fern), it is then that the wings, the arms can be dropped, shields, trays be lowered. Yes, it is then, it is thus that the boughs fade, the fruits, the seeded globes, staying suspended in the air, as in the skies the stars, the heavenly bodies, those stocks of life (cut from the former life which produced them), those bombs which will burst and will strew themselves at the necessary moment, if the need is.

Here then, on one hand, the fruits,[1] and on the other (but it is the same thing) the stars, heavenly bodies, bulbs, globes, sources, balls of light.

It is the stock of future life which shines so intensely, so calmly, assured of its power, radiant and joyous, to reseed life.

Perhaps light is, as a secondary quality, nothing but joy, bright eyes, a glimmer (phosphorescent) of the power to reseed life, the glimmer of the resource of life, the pride of the stock for the future.

Thus light would be but a secondary quality... But *it lights up*. Lights up that which actually lives, which is in other words the process of dying: the world of extension, objects in space. A secondary quality of Time.

Time, Flow, Rhythm would be primary. Space, light would

[1] In the plant world, the explosion comes before the bomb, the lifting of daggers before the conspiracy. The glory is only the announcement, annunciation. The flower is the angel with pointed wings, announcer of the next sphericity: fruit.

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come only afterwards as appearances and secondary qualities. Light being only the bright eyes of time, of a Time knotted in fruits, in stars, stock for the time to come, for the future, for life.

The fruits, the stars, the bulbs would be only the knots of Time, shining because of their power, of their joy to be able to reseed life.

*

But the asparagus-fern, like a thin cedar, stretches out its carpets underneath, stretches its sheets out underneath, as firemen their blankets, to receive—so that they will fall softly to the ground, so they will softly regain the ground—the bodies of the angels of light, jumping out of the burning house, the skyscraper, of the burning tower.

Thus the asparagus-fern stretches out its carpets, its superimposed sieves, tiered carpets, its protective palms...

Those sheets which hide the earth from angels, hide from them death, the break, hide and spirit away pain and death. At the same time they hide from the earth the fall, the dazzling fall of angels (rays of sunlight).

Hiding the ground from angels, hiding angels from the ground; sparing each from wound, by dazzlement or breakage; and death.

Here then its protection of two faces, ambiguous, on both sides right hand left hand.

*

This more to add:

Gradation, a gradual elevation of the motion of the hand to shade the eyes.

Floors in attics... Shelves...

Slender and powerful sedentary gliders. Gliders level and sedentary.

Tiered flight of powerful gliders level and sedentary...

1962

Translated by Sarah Plimpton

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Adam, Adam, Shave Your Face

Eric Thompson

Our world is the Mesopotamian Plain. We have one city, called the City, which is located almost exactly in the center of the plain. Half of us live in the City, the other half on farms in the countryside. As far as we know, we natives of the plain are the only humans on the face of the earth.

Adam dominates our lives. We live in houses and sleep in beds because Adam invented houses and beds. We are warm at night because Adam taught us the secret of fire. Our hearts are stirred by poetry because Adam showed us how to speak in meter and in rhyme. Practically every device that makes our lives fuller or more comfortable is a gift from Adam.

You might think that he would be our hero, but just the opposite is true. We hate him, because we consider him the enemy of God. Listen long enough to any conversation, in town or out in the country, and you'll hear an Adam story. Most of them are simple, vicious attacks on the man and are forgotten in a few weeks. But a few of them are imaginative tales that touch something deep in our souls and become a permanent part of Adam's legend. Here are three Adam myths from among the dozen or so that have lasted: If Adam looks you in the eye, you'll go mad. My old uncle tells me he heard that story one hundred and twenty years ago. There are whole settlements in the countryside and many City people who still believe it; Eve's occasional Negro children are the result of Adam's eating black bread just before he and Eve make love. That story originated fairly recently—about fifteen years ago. Go to one of our weekly troubadour festivals and

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you'll hear several versions of it in song; Satan gave Adam the secret of fire in exchange for a quart of whiskey. Of all the Adam stories, that one is the oldest. There are records of it from three hundred years ago, and it probably is a good deal older than that.

In the middle of May of this year the wildest Adam story yet began drifting into town from the countryside. Adam, it was said, was building a magical moving fortress, in which he planned to attack and kill God.

I had seen City people grow angry over previous Adam stories, but never to the point where the entire town went crazy. This time was different. The day after the magical fortress story reached town, groups of wild-eyed men began to collect on every street corner to shout curses and threats at Adam (who was two hundred and thirty miles away) for his monstrous plan. Five nights after the story hit town, there was a massive torchlight rally in our main square. Adam was burned in effigy twenty-three times, and Eve twice. Near the end of the rally I myself was surrounded by a group of men who felt that I hadn't been showing enough enthusiasm. They told me to get up on the speaker's platform and revile Adam, or they would tear me apart. I hopped onto the wooden stage and shouted that Adam was a loathsome swine and the cause of all our troubles. I suggested that we burn him in effigy again, and we did. They let me put the torch to the cloth image. When I did, they cheered me.

Before going on—my name is Tubal-cain. I am thirty-three years old, and Adam and Eve are my great-great-great-great-great-grandparents. My life's work is inventing musical instruments. I'm proudest of the trumpet, the tuba, and the flute. My greatest failure is the ornophone, which makes a sound that only pigs can hear, and when they hear it, they don't like it. There are certain families in the countryside that admire the ornophone and play it at celebrations, simply because it's one of the few things that Adam didn't invent. I think they're fools, but if they want to torment their pigs, that's their business.

I have a darling wife named Sonia, a wonderful girl who plays the best flute of anyone I know.

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Because inventing musical instruments doesn't bring me any money, I also work as a contributing editor for *Image* magazine. The pay is good, my assignments are interesting, and I'm left with enough free time to work on my instruments.

Two nights after the torchlight rally Sonia and I were spending a quiet evening at home. Outside, mobs went howling through the streets shouting obscene slogans about Adam. We had our windows closed, so it was reasonably quiet. Around nine o'clock we were playing a trumpet and flute duet, one of our favorite pastimes, when there was a knock on our door. I opened the door, and there stood Jared, the editor-in-chief of *Image* magazine. He came into the room, said hello to Sonia, and then turned to me.

"The country man who delivers my carrots came today," he said. "I was just talking to him. He says the Golden Vigilantes are on their way to Adam's house. They're going to kill him. I want you to reach Adam first and get the story."

The Golden Vigilantes are a band of North Country hoodlums who roam the countryside in gold-colored hoods and terrorize people. They have a motto: "We will kill you if we like."

"I've never covered a murder," I said.

"It may not be a murder," said Jared. "Lots of people have tried to kill Adam through the years. He's a hard man to kill. Get to him, stay with him, and see what happens."

The assignment appealed to me. I had always wanted to meet Adam and Eve. When Sonia said she was worried about my getting mixed up with the Golden Vigilantes, both Jared and I reassured her; they would be happy to have me around, since it would mean publicity for them.

"When do you want me to leave?" I asked Jared.

"Oh, not tonight. Tomorrow morning will be soon enough. According to our files, Adam and Eve live at the base of Diana's Mountain. That's where the Golden Vigilantes think they live, too."

"I'll find them."

I promised Jared that I would be back, with the story fin-

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ished, within a month, which would be early enough to get it into the August issue. He wished me luck, and left.

Sonia and I went right to bed, so that I would be rested for my trip in the morning. But before we slept, we talked for a while about the assignment. At one point Sonia said something that struck me as unusual: "Promise you'll give Eve a fair break. Nobody knows a thing about her, at least not anything since she left the Garden of Eden. But everything that's said about her is bad. And everything that's supposed to be bad about her is based on her loving Adam. What else is she supposed to do?"

I promised Sonia I would be fair and open-minded about Eve. Then we made love, with sadness because of the coming separation.

The Mesopotamian Plain stretches four hundred and fifty miles from east to west and four hundred miles from north to south. The City is within three miles of the exact center of the plain. To the west of the City lies Nod. Beyond Nod is the Garden of Eden and the great desert, which form the western boundary of our world. North of the City is North Country, home territory of the Golden Vigilantes. North Country's uppermost edge is lined with towering mountains, which no man has ever tried to cross. South of the City is Warm And Easy Land, where many of our people go to live when they grow old. The sea is Warm And Easy Land's southern boundary.

Old Territory, the most thickly settled of the country regions, stretches east from the City until it reaches the impassable swamps. Just to this side of the swamps is Diana's Mountain, where Adam and Eve were reported to live. It is the only mountain in the east.

At six-thirty on the morning after I got my assignment, I walked through the City's East Gate. I could already see Diana's Mountain, though it was two hundred and thirty miles away. The top of it sat on the eastern horizon, the tiny point of a tiny sword. Friends of mine who had visited the

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mountain had spoken of its awesome size. But that morning it looked to me like a toy hill that a father might build his son in the backyard.

The walk from the City to the mountain takes the average traveler nine or ten days. I was in a hurry, and I planned to cut the time to six days. The extreme flatness of the plain would help me to stick to my timetable. So would my light load—a single change of clothes and my trumpet.

I slept in the open fields at night. During the day I walked. From time to time, as I would pass a farm, pretty girls would stop their work and wave to me. Once I came upon a group of kids playing jump rope in the road, chanting the favorite jump-rope rhyme of all the world's children:

"Adam's beard is full of fleas,
Hangs way down between his knees.
If you'd join the human race,
Adam! Adam! Shave your face!"

I maintained the schedule I had set myself. Diana's Mountain grew bigger and bigger. By the end of the third day it dominated the landscape. By the middle of the fifth day it was so big that it frightened me to look at it. When I woke on the morning of the sixth day, I was thirty miles from its base. Its incredible height kept the sun from shining on me until ten-thirty. The size of the mountain had become the main fact in the life of everything around me. The birds flew differently. The grass waved differently. I had to fight the impulse to run away and get back to where things were a bearable size.

At three-thirty in the afternoon of the sixth day I rounded a bend in the path. A quarter of a mile away, nestled against the base of the mountain, I saw a house. I also saw several hundred men surrounding the house in a gigantic circle. Each man was wearing a hood the color of gold, and each carried a flaming torch.

As I came closer to them, I saw that each man in the circle held his neighbor's shoulder with his free hand. Every so often a tall man with a very high hood would shout, "One step forward!" The human circle would constrict strangely, like a palsied muscle. The awkwardness puzzled me.

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When I reached the men a minute later I could understand their awkwardness. None of the hoods they were wearing had eyeholes. The Golden Vigilantes were trying to kill Adam without having to look him in the eye. They were afraid the sight of his face would drive them mad.

I crawled silently between two of them and got inside their circle. Then I went to the porch of the house. I was about to try the front door when I saw a note nailed to it. It said:

Dear Seth,
Your mother and I are up the mountain. Come and see us.
Love,
Your father Adam

Putting the note in my pocket, I went to the circle of men again and crawled out. Then I walked to the base of the mountain and began to climb. I estimated that it would take the Golden Vigilantes several more hours to discover that the house was empty.

By the time the sun went down I had climbed about a third of the way up the mountain. I continued to climb for another hour or so, until I must have been about six thousand feet up. I could have climbed even longer, but not long enough to reach Adam and Eve that night, so I decided to stop. My dinner consisted of grass, which was better than nothing at all.

Sitting there in the darkness chewing the grass, I witnessed the exact moment when the Vigilantes set fire to Adam and Eve's house. I had been watching their torches far below me for half an hour. Their circle of fire had slowly gotten tighter and tighter. Suddenly the circle disintegrated into individual streaks, all rushing toward the black center. Within a minute the house had become a good-sized bonfire.

I was so high up on the mountain that I could also see the fires of the City. Sonia was somewhere among them, and that realization made me lonely.

When I lay down to go to sleep, I saw a dot of fire far above me on the mountain. There was my story.

I woke up at nine o'clock the next morning. The view was

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breath-taking. I could see clear across the plain to the Garden of Eden and the desert beyond. The entire spring plain was a beautiful green. Little dirt roads ran through the green, connecting farms like the strings of a cobweb. I could see the sparkling ocean to the south and the mountains to the north. I could see the whole world.

I climbed for five hours. At one o'clock I had come within a thousand feet of the summit, and there was still no sign of Adam and Eve. As I rested for a moment, a mountain lion appeared out of nowhere and trotted up to me. I offered him my spare shirt, and he ate it. Then he trotted away.

I started to climb again. Five hundred feet from the summit I found Adam. As I came around a knoll, I saw him standing in a pocket of flat land. He was sawing a large board, too intent on his work to notice me.

He was quite thin. The hair around his temples was gray. Deep lines spread out from the corners of his eyes like the tributaries of a river. He had a good face, full of what the Golden Vigilantes would call weakness and what I call intelligence. The children's jump-rope rhyme about him wasn't accurate. His beard was short.

The field in which he was standing ended in a sheer drop of at least a thousand feet. Right at the edge, about forty feet from Adam, was a machine made of wood. One glimpse of it let me know that it was the magical moving fortress that had the whole world in a state of murderous rage.

Its central part was a twenty-five-foot-long tube. At the end two little boards stuck out from the tube, one on each side. Slightly forward of the middle of the tube, a big board stuck out on one side. The board Adam was sawing was obviously going to be attached to the other side.

I didn't need to be told what it was. Adam was building a stiff-winged bird. It was intended to fly. What kind of man, I thought, would think of such a thing? The worst that could happen if one of my inventions went wrong would be that some pigs would be made miserable; if Adam's flying machine didn't work, he would lose his life.

"How can it fly if the wings are stiff?" I called.

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Adam looked up from his work. He studied me for a moment. Then he spoke, "Do you know how a kite flies?"

"The wind blows it up."

"That's what it looks like, but it's not so. Most of the time the wind blows sideways, but a kite goes up because its shape makes it go up. That's how my machine flies, only it's better than a kite because it's a better shape than a kite. As long as there's a wind it will stay up. Even if the wind dies, it will just sink slowly to the ground."

"How do you turn it?"

"I'll be sitting on one wing, and my wife will be on the other. Whichever way we want to turn, the person on that wing will lean out away from the body."

"Why don't you use a rudder?"

"You mean like on a boat?"

"Yes."

Adam walked over to me and slapped my face gently. I had done the same thing to Sonia many times.

"I will use a rudder!" he said.

"You could put a board that pivots on a stick between the wings. If you wanted to turn left, the person on the left could just pull the board toward him."

"Not a board. Canvas. It will be lighter and easier to hold. We're taking the first flight tomorrow. Do you want to come?"

"Yes."

"It's possible the machine won't work. I've never tested it."

"That's all right."

We shook hands. I told him my name, and how *Image* had assigned me to do a story about him. He was delighted. No one had ever interviewed him before, he said, and he would be more than happy to cooperate. He obviously thought that *Image*'s interest meant that the world's attitude toward him was changing. I didn't know how to tell him that exactly the opposite was true.

He noticed my trumpet, which was slung over my back, and asked me what it was. When I told him, he said, "Will you play it for me?"

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"I'll give you and Eve a concert," I said. "Where is Eve?"

"She's at the camp making coffee. She'll be glad to meet you. She'll ask you a hundred questions about the City. She's always wanted to live there. That's where we're going tomorrow. It will be Eve's first visit."

"There's something I haven't told you. It's bad news."

Adam looked quizzical. I told him the state of the world: how everyone believed that he was building a machine in which he would try to kill God; how the entire City, and the countryside, too, wanted to kill him; how the Golden Vigilantes had burned his house down. When I finished, it was almost a minute before he spoke.

"We'll have to fly to the great desert. There's nobody there to kill me. If you still want to fly with us, you'll have to walk back from the desert."

"That's all right. But what about your house?"

"We've had fourteen houses burned down. I'll just build a new one somewhere after the world has calmed down."

"You aren't planning to kill God in your machine, are you?"

"No."

Around a hillock came Eve, carrying a pot of coffee and two cups. When she saw me, she stopped and smiled.

Her hair was blond and long, falling well below her shoulders, and with the afternoon sun hitting it, she seemed to have a golden halo. Her eyes, which were a very dark brown, had many fine lines at their corners. ("One for each of my children," she said later. For the record, she has two hundred and seventeen children.) She was bundled up to her ears in mountain lion pelts, but as far as I could tell, she had a slim figure. I have always liked mature women, and under different circumstances I might have made a play for her.

When I told her who I was and what I was doing there, she was as pleased as Adam had said she would be.

"Tell me about the markets," she said. "I've heard there are merchants who have hundreds of dresses to sell."

I told her about the great bazaar at the center of town, where a woman can buy clothing and jewelry in incredible

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variety. Then she made me tell her about the actors who travel around town performing dramatic spectacles. I told her about taverns that have outdoor tables, where you can sit and watch rich people go by on horses.

When I finished, she spoke to Adam.

"The first thing after we get there, let's go to a tavern. Then you can take me shopping."

Adam took her by the waist. "Excuse us," he said to me, and he led his surprised wife away, over a little rise of ground.

The next few minutes were awful. I would hear Adam's voice, very low, then Eve's, angry and anguished. Most of the time I couldn't make out what they were saying, but once I heard Eve clearly: "Why can't we be normal, like other people? I want friends, and a home that doesn't get burned down every time you invent something! I'm tired of living like this!"

But she was calm when they came back to me, and she had her arm around Adam.

"Put this in your piece," she said. "'Eve says that the Golden Vigilantes and everyone like them are a bunch of goons.'"

I promised her that I would. Eve poured the coffee that she had brought. I drank one cup while she and Adam shared the other. When we had finished, we all worked on the flying machine.

Adam worked on rigging the rudder that he and I had talked about. I helped Eve attach the remaining wing to the body of the machine. It was a matter of inserting the wing into the slot in the tube and then making it secure by lacing the two sections together with cord. It wasn't just a matter of tying them together, she told me. If it were done too loosely, the wing would sag in flight and not give the machine any lift. If it were too tight, the resulting rigidity might cause the wing to snap off.

We worked fast, so that we would be sure to finish before night fell.

The mountain lions started howling at dusk. We made a

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roaring fire at camp, which kept us warm as we ate a delicious stew that Eve had made of potatoes, carrots, and beef. When we finished the meal, Adam passed out an invention of his called cigars, which I had never seen before. Cigars are tubular devices about six inches long, tobacco leaves on the outside and shredded tobacco on the inside. You put one end in your mouth, light the other end, and inhale the smoke. The effect is very pleasant, though slightly dizzying. It struck me as typical that Adam would be the person to find a use for tobacco. After several puffs on my cigar I made good my afternoon's promise to Adam, and played the trumpet for him and his wife. I moved several yards away from them and stood on a rock. I chose a sad melody.

The mountain lions stopped howling when I began. I looked out over the black plain as I played. There was nothing but space between me and the City. I felt that Sonia could hear my music, if only she listened closely. As I sustained a note, I thought, "This B flat is for you, Sonia." I played the next note for a big orange star that had caught my eye. When I finished and sat down again by the fire, Adam and Eve looked at me with admiration.

The mountain lions came on full voice again. Eve invited me to put my head in her lap. I did, and was careful not to blow the smoke from my cigar in her face. As the three of us lounged around the fire, I held a formal interview with Adam. What follows are my questions and Adam's answers.

Image—How old are you?

Adam—Four hundred and ninety-seven.

Image—And Eve is also four hundred and ninety-seven, of course.

Adam—No. She's four hundred and ninety-three.

Image—How can that be?

Adam—I was nineteen when I was created, and she was fifteen.

Image—I've always thought that both of you were older when you were created, more like twenty-five.

Adam—If we had been, things would have happened a lot differently.

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Image—How long were you in the Garden of Eden before God threw you out?
Adam—Two days.
Image—Do you mind talking about that time?
Adam—No.
Image—Tell me about it.

Adam paused for a moment. Eve held a stick in the fire until it caught. Then she relit Adam's cigar with it.

Adam—I was created late on a June morning, in the middle of a warm shower. The mud I was lying in was warm from the rain. It was a beautiful way to enter the world. I was created with my eyes open, and the first thing I saw was God's face right above me...
Image—I'd like to interrupt for a moment. What does God look like?
Adam—He's about my height, maybe an inch shorter. His eyes are brown, very much like Eve's. He has the highest, most noble brow you'll ever see, but the most striking thing about him is his hair, which is long and completely gray.
Image—Did he say anything to you in that first moment after he created you?
Adam—Yes. He said, "Hello, Adam. You are my hope."
Image—He said that?
Adam—Yes. Then he helped me to stand, and he led me all around Eden in the warm rain and showed me all the plants and animals. When I was delighted with something, a zebra or a penguin, say, he was delighted, too. That night he told me about sleep, and I went to sleep with my head in his lap, just the way you are now with Eve. When I woke up the next morning, he said, "Now I'm going to give you the best thing of all." Then he pointed at a daisy which was growing a few feet away from us, and he said, "Now." The daisy turned into Eve.
Image—He didn't make Eve out of one of your ribs?
Adam—No.
Image (Speaking to Eve)—What was the first thing you saw when you were created?
Eve—Adam and God.

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Image—What did you think of them?
Eve—I thought it was funny that one of them should have clothes on and the other should be naked like me.
Image (Speaking to Adam)—Did Eve's nakedness mean anything to you?
Adam—Would it mean anything to you if you were nineteen years old and you saw a naked fifteen-year-old girl?
Image—You weren't in a state of innocence?
Adam—Not after Eve was created.
Image—What actually happened after she was created?
Adam—God told me to show Eve everything in Eden, as he'd done for me the day before. He told us he was going away, but that he'd be back in the afternoon with a special gift for both of us. Then he left, and we made love. Then I took her around Eden and showed her everything there was to see. That was a sweet walk.
Image—You didn't feel any guilt about what you'd done?
Adam—I felt the way I had the day before when I saw my first ostrich. It was just a delight.
Image—Then why did God send the two of you out of Eden?
Adam—Because we'd discovered something on our own. We made love again later on, and when God came back, he found us lying in each other's arms. We smiled at him and said hello, but he just sat down on a log and held his head in his hands. We went to him and asked him what was the matter, but he wouldn't have anything to do with us. Finally he said, "That was the wonderful gift I was going to give you. But you didn't need me to give it to you. All right. Let's see how well you make out without my giving you anything." That was it. He drove us out of Eden.
Image—What was it like, being driven out of Eden?
Adam—It was awful. We were like two children lost in the woods. We didn't know how to do anything except make love. I mean that literally. We didn't know how to find food or keep warm or anything. We must have gone back fifty times to the entrance of Eden, begging God to let us come back. But he wouldn't. For a long time we really wanted to die. But we didn't even know how to do that.
Image—How did you survive?

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Adam—Like dumb animals. We slept in caves, if we could find a cave that didn't already have wolves in it. We ate the bark off of trees until we learned that wild berries were better. I don't know if you can understand how ignorant we were. The stupidest child born today is taught a thousand things a minute by his parents—things that we had to learn by ourselves.

Eve—And yet after a while God occasionally helped us again—though he would never admit he was doing it. I had an awful time when I was pregnant with Cain. I couldn't keep anything down when I ate. So God made cows give milk, which they hadn't done before, and I had a food I could eat without throwing up.

Adam—The day Cain was born, God kept the sun out all night so Eve and the baby wouldn't be cold. I didn't discover fire until fifty years after that.

Image—What did God think of Cain?

Adam—He was crazy about him. He used to hold Cain on his knees and make funny faces at him. We were all close again for a long time after Cain was born.

Image—What happened then?

Adam—Cain began to grow up. He started having ideas different from God's. It made God furious. From the time Cain was fourteen until he was twenty-two, he and God fought every time they spoke to each other. Finally Cain got tired of fighting. He wrote a book of poetry and gave it to God as a present. Cain invented poetry, not me.

Image—What happened with the book?

Adam—God threw it in the fire without looking at it.

Image—And?

Adam—Cain threw a rock at God, which missed. But it hit Abel. The rest is just as it's told in the legends. God banished Cain to Nod.

Image—What was Abel like?

Adam—I really don't remember. It was so long ago.

Eve—He was a nice, pleasant, ordinary young man. I remember feeling guilty because I loved Cain more than him.

Image—Have you seen Cain since then?

Adam—We see him all the time. He can't leave Nod, so we

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go there.

Image—What's he like now?

Adam—He's fine. The last time we saw him, he was developing a new breed of cattle.

Image—Do you hate God?

Adam—No. Eve and I are probably the only people who really love him.

Image—Why do you say that?

Adam—Because as far as I know, we're the only people who aren't afraid of him.

Image—You really love him, when Abel's death was his fault?

Adam—That was a long time ago. He's changed as much as we have since then.

The night sky exploded with light. Ten thousand angels sang "Hosanna!" A warm breeze like the ones off the desert in summertime swept through the camp, and there, standing on the other side of our fire, was God.

He wore a robe that glowed a dazzling amber. His physical appearance was just as Adam had described it, but Adam had left out one important detail. Over his eyes he wore circular pieces of glass, which were held together and secured to his head by a thin wooden frame.

"Adam," he said, "I've come up with something, and I want you to tell me what you think of it."

"Let's have it," said Adam.

God drew an incredible musical instrument from the folds of his robe. Its central part was a large cloth bag. Four small tubes came out of different parts of it. Three of the tubes were unbroken cylinders, and the fourth had holes for fingering and a mouthpiece. It was so absurd looking it reminded me of the ornophone.

He began to pace around the fire, blowing into the tube with the mouthpiece. Nothing happened. I was afraid I was going to laugh. As soon as the bag was fully inflated, though, God began to make raucous, wildly stirring music. There were no pauses in it. It was just a constant roaring avalanche of sound.

When God stopped, Adam was grinning like a fool.

"That's the most incredible thing I've ever seen," he said.

"Did you like it?" said God.

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"Yes, but that's not the main point. What made you think of it?"

"I don't know. It just came into my head. Eve, how are you?"

He kissed her cheek.

"I'm fine," she said. "How are your glasses?"

"Wonderful." He looked at me. "Hello, young man."

I said hello.

"Are you afraid of me?" said God.

"Yes."

"Well, that attitude will never get you in trouble. I suppose Adam has been telling you that you shouldn't fear me."

"Yes."

"Adam, you mustn't do that. How are people going to respect me if they're not afraid of me?"

"People don't have to fear you to respect you," said Adam.

"You have a higher opinion of people than I do."

Adam offered God a cigar, which he took and lit.

"What have you been doing lately?" said God.

"I've invented a flying machine."

"A flying machine? I don't want you to fly. I want birds to fly, fish to move in the water, and man and the animals to go on land."

Adam was silent.

"I could hit you with a thunderbolt while you were in the air."

Adam still didn't speak.

"The least you can do is invite me to fly with you."

"You're invited."

"When are you flying?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"Good. I'm looking forward to it. This is an excellent cigar."

God, Adam, and Eve chatted for another half hour, while I sat still and listened. At one point God asked them when they thought next winter's first snowfall should be. Adam laughed at that and asked why he was asking them. God answered that he was a creator, not an executive, and had no interest in such things as first snowfalls. Adam suggested November 27th, and

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God said it would be so.

After a while, Adam suggested that he, Eve, and I go to bed, since he wanted to begin the flight at dawn. The three of us said goodnight to God and lay down near the fire under mounds of mountain lion skins. God remained seated by the fire lost in thought.

I found it hard to get to sleep. From time to time I looked up at God, his robe glowing brightly in the firelight. I thought of getting up and talking to him, but in spite of what Adam had said, I was still afraid of him. Sometime around midnight I fell asleep.

Eve woke me before the sun was up. God and Adam were standing some distance away, looking out over the gray, predawn plain. It was terribly cold. When I sat up, Eve gave me a cup of coffee.

The sun came up while we were eating breakfast. The shadow that our mountain cast on the plain looked like a gigantic fat wedge. The first time I noticed it, the point of the wedge was in the great desert, our destination, on the far side of Eden. Ten minutes later I looked again and saw the point of the wedge right on Eden. I watched it steadily and could actually see it move slowly back toward us.

Adam finished eating first and went off to check the flying machine. He was very happy, and he whistled as he walked away from us. I was beginning to be terrified. When the rest of us finished eating, I helped Eve gather all the gear together. God licked his finger and held it in the air to check the direction and force of the wind.

God, Eve, and I carried the gear to the flying machine. Adam positioned things around the inside of the machine's body, and Eve tied them down. Soon they were finished with the equipment.

"Eve," said Adam, "you and God will sit next to the body —you on the left wing and God on the right. There are leather straps to tie around your waists. Tubal-cain, get behind the right wing. I'll get behind the left. When I give you the signal, push gently. It won't take much effort. The instant you feel

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the machine move, fall forward over the wing and pull yourself up. You'll be sitting next to God on the outside. Have you got it?"

I said that I had. Adam got behind his wing, and I got behind mine. Eve turned around on her wing so that she was facing her husband.

"Are you afraid?" said Adam.

"Not as much as the day Cain was born."

"We may fall sharply in the first few seconds. Don't be surprised."

"All right. If this doesn't work and we die, I want you to know that what I've liked most about you is the way you dance."

She turned back around, and Adam looked over at me.

"I'm going to say, 'One, two, three, go.' Remember, push very gently. Ready?"

"Yes."

"All right. One, two, three, go."

I pushed easily against the wing. The machine began to move almost immediately. Following Adam's instructions, I fell forward over the wing and scrambled to the front edge. With my eyes shut, I sat up and tied the leather strap around my waist. Then I waited to die. But long seconds passed and I knew I was still alive because I could hear God breathing.

I took my first real look around. The mountain top was far behind us. We were flying level and steady. We were as much a part of the sky as any cloud.

Adam shouted for all of us to lean forward. When we did, we began to fall through the sky so recklessly that my heart stopped beating. Adam called for us to sit up straight again, and when we did, the machine leveled off. We had lost perhaps one-fifth of our altitude in twenty seconds.

Adam's next command was for Eve alone to lean forward. She did, and the machine went into a gentle dive. Then Adam told God to pull the rudder toward him. God brought us into a smooth, perfect right turn. We could soar like the angels and go where we wanted.

When we were a couple of hundred feet from the ground, Eve sat up and leveled off the machine. Then Adam had her

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pull the rudder toward her till we were pointed due west. I looked straight down, and there for an instant between my knees was the still-smoldering ruin of Adam and Eve's house. We were past it in a flash.

The others had seen it, too. God spoke to Adam.

"Who did that?"

"The Golden Vigilantes."

"They made a mistake. I've half a mind to inflict their first-born sons with the Black Death."

"Don't do it on my account," said Adam.

"That's one of your greatest faults. You're so tender-hearted. What kind of God do you think I'd be if I were tender-hearted?"

"You'd be the God who made cows give milk when Eve needed milk to live."

"You'll never let me live that down, will you?"

Adam leaned backward until we had climbed to a thousand feet. Then we cruised straight along and enjoyed the scenery. The machine was responding perfectly to our touch.

"The machine is excellent," said God. "If you were God instead of me, Adam, you might have created a fairly good world."

"I would have created more Eves and fewer fish," said Adam.

"That's because you see things from a human's point of view. It's not so simple when you're God."

We flew on in silence. The pretty little farm houses below us looked like my niece's doll houses. For a while a buzzard flew along beside us. I wondered if he was thinking of trying to mate with us. I'm no expert on buzzards, so I couldn't tell. After a while he lost interest and took off toward the north.

When we escaped the mountain's shadow, the sun made us warm. All the original excitement had left me by then, and I have to confess that after about forty-five minutes of flying, I became bored. I felt like sleeping, and I did, dozing off with a glorious sense of well-being. Time passed.

It must have been two hours later when God shook me awake. When I opened my eyes, I could see the City twenty miles away. I could also see that we were much lower than

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earlier.

"The wind has completely died," God said to me. "We're going to have to land."

Though Adam knew very well what kind of reception was waiting for him, he didn't look upset. He began to give us landing instructions. God and Eve were simply to sit still. Adam and I were to hold a blanket between us, as wide-open as possible.

When we had fallen to about a hundred feet, Adam gave the command to open the blanket, which he had passed to me. We opened it and gripped it as hard as we could. As soon as it was open, the machine slowed abruptly to quarter-speed. We were down to twenty miles an hour. Adam picked a long treeless meadow, and by Eve leaning forward, we dropped to within ten feet of the ground. Adam gave the command for all of us to raise our legs.

Then Adam leaned slightly forward, lowering us inches at a time. The tips of our wings began to chop the tall grass. In another moment the bottom of the machine started to scrape the ground. We slowed down gently until we were completely stopped. The flight was over. We were about five miles from the City wall.

The four of us undid our straps and climbed free of the machine. It felt strange to walk after sitting for so long.

We heard a roar from our left. Thirty men were running toward us brandishing clubs. We were back in civilization. When the men got close enough to recognize God, they threw themselves prostrate on the ground. God spoke.

"I will deal with Adam in my own time in my own way. You shall not harm him, nor his wife, nor the persons with whom he associates. However, those of you who love me will be doing my work if you will destroy this abominable machine."

The men sprang to their feet with a roar and tore the flying machine apart. Within two minutes they had completely destroyed it. From time to time they would look at God, and God would beam his approval.

Eve was crying.

"What kind of God are you?" she said. "You abandon the

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best man in the world so that this pack of dogs will adore you. You should be ashamed."

"Be quiet, Eve," said God. "I'm sorry, but it was the only thing to do. I'd love to reward goodness and intelligence, but if I did, mankind would be in chaos. Adam is alive and safe. That's the main thing."

"Everybody hates Adam. You've made him an outcast."

"If there were any practical way to have it otherwise, I'd do it. I have to leave you now. Goodbye, Eve. I hope you can understand. Tubal-cain, I enjoyed meeting you. Don't believe everything Adam says. Adam, goodbye. I'll see you again in a while."

Then he was gone. Eve spoke to Adam.

"Can we stop now? Can we get a farm somewhere or a house in the City? I don't think I can take another time like this."

"Maybe it's time," said Adam.

It took us an hour and a half to walk to the East Gate of the City. As we got near the City, crowds lined our way. God's word had preceded us, and though there were thousands of people around us, there was absolute silence. No one made a move to harm Adam. I looked back once and saw our trail of dust between the walls of people.

When we reached the East Gate, I pointed out the miniature mountaintop on the eastern horizon to Adam and Eve. Then we entered the City. Inside were more thousands of people, all standing in curious silence.

Adam and Eve stayed with Sonia and me for three days, which were enormously enjoyable for all of us. I taught Adam to play the trumpet. Sonia and Eve became fast friends. They went shopping together each day, which I think was the high point of the visit for Eve.

At the end of three days they left on foot for Nod, to visit Cain. I haven't heard from them or any word about them since. But before they left, Adam told me the beginning of an idea he had for a way to let people make love without the risk of pregnancy. This is sure to cause a commotion, so I expect to hear a new crop of Adam stories sometime soon.

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Michael Benedikt

The Chest of Energy

The energy chest
One keeps dipping in

With the hand of one's head
And one's chest is seldom empty

It's lively.
Even at night when we sleep

We see it
Standing by the bedroom window

Looking out into the distant valley, just standing there
On tiptoe.

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Tony Towle

Daybreak

The muse at daybreak stuttering, informs my bed,
pines in the scented winter air for poems,
and mumbles about the government and whether I should vote:

"The government stinks. Withhold your vote of red and white
its hidden sea and blue of politic sky
showing the present world and so to surround our realm."

Government would speak as well, from the vales of *Abstraction*
who on the death of Pound will ramble on once more,
their inbred grandeur making you feel like a schmuck
presiding at a thousand year dinner of elegance.
Milton of course could order these people around, God, Satan,
Liberty, Progress and the rest. To me God might say
You employ a distinctive style and I know who you are,
but you are not illuminating for me.
You do not give me any ideas, about myself or what I have done.

Satan: Since you deal only with your own activity
and in immeasurable vanity,
I will eventually bring you something you dislike;
and in phrase of unshakeable metaphor
as with that you would think to spin out your life.

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Satan concludes: You will have more poems than you hope,
but more than you wish, a finger pressed to a line,
your tongue through a word's transparency
but my older tongue of iron comes inexorably to cover yours
and in your future is of greater eloquence.

The day half gone, the muse and its servants fled,
a sandwich gone through you in enormity to Philadelphia,
cheese and milk flowing through you and into Boston,
smoke on the way to Minneapolis.

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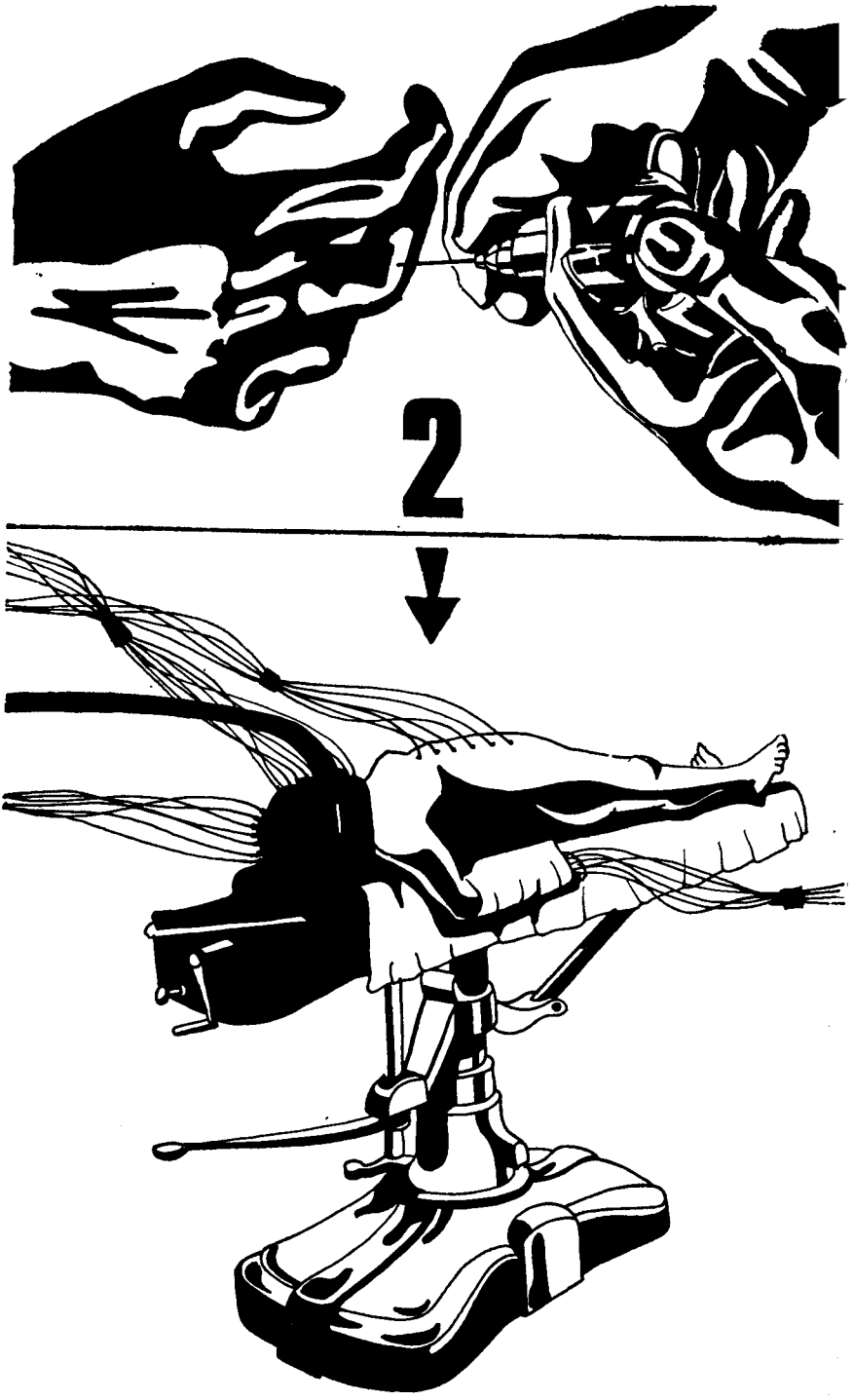

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Clark Coolidge

Poems

1.

g'up t'it

lengths

passle a

drenched
hard add flaghabit

phew huge
have ace log do

monk (fume)
flange
pads
bread off tap

margin imbue
mug

be to

be to (Saab)

arm puck

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4.

knocked a tock part slammed

gosh pend ossified are slant

tap

mile of organ hume top

a blurt

is sill is snip is sun

cloud is in it

at not

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woodpecker
grabber
woodpecker
nice
woodpecker
stone
woodpecker
flask
woodpecker
un
woodpecker
reader
woodpecker
guard
woodpecker
plunger
woodpecker
staple
woodpecker
gravel
woodpecker
grape
woodpecker
taper
woodpecker
card
woodpecker
crepe
woodpecker
cup
woodpecker
glove
woodpecker
slag
woodpecker
clock
woodpecker
smudge
woodpecker
coffee

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7.

glass xenon rue

arp arp arp arp arp arp

raymond racers

rum glove the E of tube

pear

hung size mobility

negate

lozenge

fuzz a

burger

tags

numb lean

burn

file file

silence marbles

crust tock

left nail

Ked

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Don Weingarten

Two Poems

I

There is a man in pajamas
standing on the ledge.

So dismantle your body
and put the pieces in a tube.

II

Dear you,

A.
I want you to understand the wonderful world;
This is the world we have.

B.
This is an exciting business; how for instance,
There seems to be a flower on your nose.

C.
Fuck shit piss cunt.
Dick turd cunt shit.
Shit fuck piss cock.

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David C. Lehman

The Presidential Years

•

1. In the sixth grade
Eisenhower to go down to South America
And Mrs. Goldman to write on the board,
"Watch C.B.S. Reports tonight on Ike's trip
And write a report."
And she to call him "Ike."

The first summer we went to the country
And I heard the names Eisenhower and Stevenson,
And standing there next to the old green Chevrolet
Looking for a summer bungalow
Seeing the signs
And the names Eisenhower and Stevenson
And asking my mother which is better
And she says "Stevenson."

And then on Election Night in 1956
My sister and I share a room
And we go to sleep early
And we do not know who wins until the next morning
And my mother wakes us up for school
And my sister asks who won
And my mother smiles and no, she says, no, we lost.

2. My sister's cousin Johnny and I sit in the front seats
Of the car going to my Uncle Bert
And my father is driving nervously intently
And Johnny is talking for Israel.
Johnny had a love for Israel unlike anything else.

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He said he wanted to live there.
He went to college and wrote a good report on Israel
On all of Israel
On life in Israel
And he said when Israel got independence
There were men real men
Big husky men who fought for her.
He said it was terrible what Eisenhower was doing.

I want to know more about "Eisenhower"
And I get excited and I say Johnny Johnny Johnny
On his shoulder and I ask him
And I ask him and he finally says,
"I only said that Stevenson might have been better for Israel."

In Rockaway Beach on a Sunday that summer
The summer of 1957 my father and I went to the beach
And my father had the Times
And another man asked to see a section
And pretty soon they had quite a conversation going.
It was Suez U.S. business and Eisenhower and shaking their heads
And I remember my father saying
"Don't forget Dulles. It's partly his fault too."
My father kept repeating that.

And when we came back we went to the synagogue
And every Saturday my Rabbi made a prayer in synagogue
In English for the government.
And he asked God to protect the President
And he mentioned the President by name.

And in those years he called out
"The President of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower"
In a loud booming loud booming voice.
I can still hear him today.

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3. In 1959 Ike went to South America
And I had the report to write
And the Dodgers beat the White Sox
In the World Series in an upset.
And I coolly watch the television set and smile
And say to myself that this is the first World Series
I am living through. I am now old enough
To understand what is going on and appreciate
And live it for my team, the Dodgers.
And after we won I walked around triumphantly
And I wore a Los Angeles Dodger baseball cap.

That year too John Kennedy decided on the presidency
And he met in a room in a crucial meeting
To capture the presidency with only the best war
Campaign hardened people. And he talked to the men
And he made plans and they all knew that he would be president.

I went to Canada the summer of the convention.
My father wrote post cards about the convention.
People were hoping that Stevenson would make it,
Stevenson was a fine man.
But Kennedy was nominated and he smiled and he was strong
And my father said that Kennedy certainly knew the Bible
In a fine speech quoting from Isaiah in a fine acceptance speech.

4. In the fall campaign Frank Sinatra
Sang the Kennedy song to popular tunes
In the neighborhood campaign headquarters.
And in the school halls my history teacher danced in
And he came in wearing a straw hat
With the name Kennedy all over it. He was a Rabbi
And he told us some days about his grandfather
Who invented a certain type of medical test.
I think it was the scratch test.

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This day he came in and sat down and asked us who we
were for and why.
Everyone had to stand up and explain.
And only two of us were for Nixon. I got up
And said, "I am for Kennedy for many reasons.
First of all he is a democrat like Roosevelt.
Also he is for civil rights foreign aid Social Security
And youth. And he will make Adlai Stevenson
Secretary
Of State or something, and Chester Bowles too."

The week before the elections my Rabbi in synagogue
Spoke in the sermon about a man with experience.
I looked at my watch. It had only been five years
before
That my Rabbi made a sermon that I shall never forget
About a man who fell flat on his face and got up
laughing.
He was Eddie Cantor in my mind.

And I had a feeling that Kennedy would win.
On Election Night I told my mother
And she said, "Do you think we're in this time?"

5. In the eighth grade with my red faced English teacher
In yeshiva. Although it was yeshiva
My English teacher didn't wear a yamelka. He was not
Jewish
He was Irish. And he breathed hard
Wrote on the board "John F. Kennedy is our President."
And to teach grammar and to illustrate a predicate
nominative
He reads the sentence out loud
And "John F. Kennedy...is our President" he says.
I write it down, a neat sentence.

The Stock Market takes its big tumble.
My friend Sammy comes over and says

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"We're headed for a depression I know
My father says we're headed for a depression."
I say we can't have a depression because
There is too little unemployment. We walk down the block.
Sammy is yelling wildly. His father is a member of
The "Save our Business" club. "We're headed for a depression,"
He says, "Look at the stock market. And I don't like it one bit."

I switched to Stuyvesant High School.
The first day the economics teacher
Who was very heavy and absent minded and
Had in his desk 130 typed pages of
His master's thesis and he picked them up
And he dropped them on the floor
Dirty and in jumbled order.

And he asks us about Kennedy slashing the steel prices.
Larry, a boy with long fingernails
Who was a Republican was for Rockefeller
Went home with me every day on the subway
Gets up and says, "I am against it.
Steel companies have the right to raise prices
Because they haven't done so for years
And they are entitled to make a profit."
The teacher is reading the thesis he is nodding his head
Looking up nodding his head frowning nodding
And then he says "no" and mutters about inflation
And says no inflation no that's the right answer
No that's the right answer No.

6. The day that Kennedy was killed
Was the day before the Stuyvesant-Clinton football game.
There was a rally in the auditorium
And our coach who was from Texas or Oklahoma said slowly, carefully,
"There isn't a horse that can't be bucked."

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Meanwhile half the school was marching along
Fifteenth Street to Union Square and then up to
Forty Second Street and Fifth Avenue and some got
up to
Fifty Ninth, and they were parading,
Yelling, "De Witt eats shit" until they were stopped
By policemen.
I didn't go. I stayed in school.
That day I almost got into a fight
With a fellow twice my size on the stairway
And he laughed at me. A friend of mine
Broke it up.

In English the head of the Physics Department walked
Into the room. He said, "I think you are old enough
To understand this. The President was shot today in
Texas."
I stand up. I do not understand. I say "What"
And I think, the President was shocked today in
Texas.
He leaves the room. I am sorry.

I leave early. The Clinton game is called off,
And the series has since been discontinued.
My French teacher is waiting for me. Smiling shuffling
his legs
Touching his teeth with his tongue looking at me
He says, "There is a rumor that Kennedy was shot.
Do you know anything about that?"

A week later I go to my cousin's bar mitzvah
Out in Long Island, and I bring a catalog with me
From the Bernard Baruch School of City College.
I want to be a stockbroker.
It is windy outside and we walk a mile or more
To get to the bar mitzvah
And as I walk I talk to my mother
And I think carefully of what I am to say
And I narrow my eyes.

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It is a cold windy three days after Thanksgiving
And I point to my thumb to my stomach and chest
And I brush my scarf against my face
And I say, "I too want to become President."

7. And now I am walking
After a date with a girl whom I like very much
And it is a cold February night
And I am cold
And the icicles on the cars are like teeth
And my stuffed nose and ears.
This is a small city. I can walk across
This city in an hour. I trot for the last blocks
Across the bridge.

I am thinking out "The Eisenhower Years" and
"The Kennedy Years" and I am comparing
All the suits the ties the cuff links
The clothes the portraits the graves of all the Presidents.
I am passing by all the landmarks the famous landmarks
The places history was made
And I laugh and nod my head and shake my head
And I lower my head and smack my lips
And brace myself for the return home.

And I joke with my girlfriend and my friends
And we walk to the river
And watch the ice melt
And I say, "I too will wind up under the ground."
And they say do not say that.
But I am serious, defiant.
I look at the ice in the river and say,
"We are all going to wind up under the ground."

New York City
March 1967

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Love Me Tonight, God

Marge Piercy

Dear Earl,
Everytime I hear you sing, I hurt all over. I think you are the most sincere singer in the world. When I listen to you, I want to die!

Thelma, age 13

Earl passed the tryouts for Talent Night mainly because he still limped from his accident, and because he had grown taller and skinnier than ever lying around in casts. The drama teacher, Mrs. Falkes, watched him making tortured faces, strumming dolefully on a guitar equipped with button mike, and pitied him, for even his glasses looked the wrong size. Earl sweated clean through his shirt standing on the stage in the clammy, half-lit auditorium, empty except for tryouts and fat Mrs. Falkes. He'd lost his nerve and ended up doing a song he'd heard instead of his own. He could hardly believe it was him asking people to gape at him and listen to him. He hadn't said a word at home, or his Mom would plain give up all hope for him. He remembered the scarey moment when he knew he *had* to try out, the way before he fell he had to endure painful tests by the LORD.

When Earl had come home from the hospital, full of the blood they'd given him against the word of GOD and teachings of the Brethren, knowing himself a sinner and lost, he'd been too low in mind to do more than listen to the radio and its know-it-all gabble. Some of the music, though, reminded him of the revival hymns of his childhood, when the lost

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sheep would repent and the whole congregation rock and shout to the LORD. Sitting with his cast up on a kitchen chair he heard a driving rhythm:

Oh, I was young and innercent
but I'll never be half that young no more
O baby how come?
I thought I was your permanent
but you warshed me out of your hair
O baby how come, ho ho!

It struck home. He had been young and innocent, but those days were washed out of him. He had thought himself Chosen, dreamed of standing before the congregation like Brother Gentry to show the Light and the Way: words would come from GOD, he would never falter or stammer again. In his pride he had drunk the Cup of Martyrdom in front of the whole flock, and now he was ashamed to go to Tabernacle.

He started fooling with his brother Joey's guitar and shouting with the records. It was company. The disc jockeys played a lot of British groups, and he admired them powerfully. But they didn't fill his longing, no more than the American groups with their outright hot raunchy yelling, or their falsetto patent-leather gloss. They didn't sing with a sense of sin, they didn't know his hungers. He'd always been ugly, and poor in school and laughed at; but among the Brethren he had been someone, his Mom had been proud, and he had felt GOD's attention. Everyday he had steered clear of the Devil's traps and fought for the LORD. No one could know his lost sad feeling.

His Mom would start screaming to turn that whorish radio down, he was keeping the little ones awake. She'd never have yelled at him like that before. "Hell's pipeline to the home," Mom said, but he figured it couldn't corrupt him, him thrown out like slag from the mills away from the faithful.

By the time the new term started, he'd got back his job at Fennish's service station. Fennish told Earl of another cycle he could get cheap and rebuild, but he saved for an acoustical

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guitar instead. The LORD was a jealous God and had punished Earl for his love of the cycle.

Back at school, he felt funny. All his life he had been mocked by sinners for his walking the straight and narrow. Now that he was fallen, he had expectations. But though the guys in the locker room admired his scars, he felt as held off as ever. The Devil didn't come to tempt him with the lures of the world. Those girls flouncing around, sticking out their fannies, didn't sidle up to him. The Devil didn't even put up a show of trying, he was that sure of Earl's bloodstained soul. Hadn't GOD said, "I will ever set my face against that soul that eateth blood?"

On Talent Night, with his new jeans he put on Pa's second-best silk shirt, a little stained under the arms, but still a nice deep pink. Mrs. Falkes gave him a funny look when he came backstage, so that he stopped and turned into a corner and looked to see he was all zipped and buttoned. Most of the kids on the program, like in the clubs and dance halls and so on, were from Valley Acres, instead of Franklin's Ditch (now officially Franklin) where he lived, and they were all fancied up, and once again he felt cold and queasy. He'd never before gotten up in front of a group of his own free will, except in Tabernacle, and that was different. He tuned his guitar and kept tucking the shirt in, it was sort of big on him, and before he wanted, it was his turn.

Earl stood flatfooted on the stage and the spotlight bathed him and he could feel his shadow huge on the dusty plush curtain. He gripped his guitar, he swallowed and swallowed. Pockets of anticipatory giggles. Then he squinted into the spot, flung back his horsehead and thrust his first-born song into the rustling warm room:

> Don't you see me standin hyer
> with mah weepin heart in han
> beatin mah haid agains the floor
> jis to make you understan!

Earl had been raised ten miles from Chicago, but he had learned the proper diction off records. He shouted his hunger-

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ing sorrow. From the dark a mutter of response. Earl stood under the eye of GOD, that hot spot, and singing, felt himself seen. He was getting through. He felt something that was not the toothache of living. He finished and surprised applause came at him. Mrs. Falkes had to call his name sharply to get him off. He shambled into the crowded wings and the show went on. Monday he walked through school and five or six kids remembered to tell him he was okay. By Wednesday they had forgotten. Not Dewey.

> Dear Dewey,
> I am the girl in the 5th row Thurs. I could see you smiling at me. Often I hear your voice calling, "Jeannie come to me." But the police would not let me. I will meet you anyplace, but please please stop sending me false messages. I waited by the drinking fountain for 2 hrs. Maybe you are only testing my love?
> Jeannie, age 17

Though he'd never had any use for Earl, Dewey Conklin came from Franklin's Ditch too, the youngest of a family of seven. Dewey had sung "Do the Slurp" and played his washboard and harmonica. Dewey had thick hair worn long and up over his brow like a breaking wave of black vaseline. His cheeks were pocked with fading acne, but his teeth were good and his grin frequent; grin of easy charm and sharp self-interest: hey how about me? Dewey had scored first at fourteen in the long grass by the canal. He told Earl he would score a lot oftener, but girls were always asking for presents or pins or promises.

"Your folks and mine, they're damn fools. Just plain *stu*pid, man. Sitting in this slum out in the boondocks, laid off the mills half the time and too damn scared to pick up and leave. Jesus!"

> EARL & DEWEY'S SECRET SECRETS!!!!
> 1. EARL & DEWEY luv choklit cake! Earl adores choklit in any form, matter of fact! If you want to

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score a hit with this smash boy, you'll show how handy you are in the kitchen with superterrif fudge and brownies!!
2. The Ideal Gal to DEWEY is one he can respect, a neat sweet sweetie like his own Mumsy!
3. The Ideal Girl to EARL (and he's still playing the field, fans!) is a real feminine gal....

Earl didn't go for Dewey's using God's name and his lewd boasting. Sometimes he just shriveled up. Nevertheless, when he left in the morning he cut across a vacant lot to Dewey's, and in the halls they stuck together. They rode home on the same bus, or hitchhiked together, coming over the fence onto the toll road just around past the booths. After Earl got off Fennish's they practiced, mostly at Conklins.

If only they could hear themselves. Earl wished he could be outside just coming along the street, and listen. Close up it was hard to tell. Dewey tried to teach him to read music, but he preferred just picking out the songs he made up. He rigged a system to electrify Dewey's washboard, and then they had a *sound*. They knew all the groups by now.

Saturday afternoon when he got off, they'd stop by the pizzeria and sit in the booth near the jukebox. At first others tried to put them down when they sounded off, but they *knew*, and after a while the other kids liked what they liked. Dewey would sprawl with some girl leaning on him. On his side, Earl would press his long head into braced hands, listening. Finally he would make that gesture at Dewey, sideways turn of the chin, and they'd split and go home to have a session. It thrilled him that Dewey would get up and follow him out. Nobody had ever followed him anywhere before. Then he would think, I got to save him too.

TO BE IN is to be part of the ACTION! Make that great scene with EARL & DEWEY, the newest swingers and real marv boys! To members of the EARL & DEWEY OFFICIAL FAN CLUB, EARL and DEWEY reveal *inside secrets* and *intimate facts*!! Now,

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> for the first time, *you* can read the full trew, trew story of your luvs!!! Get special rave photos, from baby pix to the luscious present!! PIX made available from the DROOLY DUO to our own TEEN SCREAM fans! Become a *real part* of the fun-filled lives of those dolls you adore! Send one dollar....

By Class Day in June, Earl had saved for a real electric guitar and modified Dewey's system to let him play drums with a foot pedal. Mrs. Falkes fussed at them when they walked in, for both were in black with their hair slicked down to their ears (they trimmed each other in Conklins' bathroom), wore near knee boots, broad lowslung leather belts, and Earl had painted his guitar silver. All got up, Earl felt shielded. They strode out, Dewey set up to his left, and they started in on Earl's song:

> If'n you would come back to me
> Ah would be your backdoor mat
> an smile an kiss your highheeled feet
> all the time you tromped me flat.

They could feel their sound blasting into the crowd. They sure were louder than anybody else, and the kids showed their approval by clapping in rhythm and pounding. Something came back at them. Dressed proper and with Dewey behind him, Earl felt less squeamish about asking people to listen to him. Though the kids clapped and yelled some, he knew they weren't good enough yet to get through: not to Him.

> Ah'm so knocked down, kicked around, uptown-downtown jis a disconnected telly-phone!

Nobody asked for autographs; it was only skinny Earl Drebs and greasy Dewey Conklin up there. But everybody knew them after that, and when summer lay over Franklin's Ditch like a scum of rancid oil, a couple of parties and a wedding came in from Valley Acres.

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EARL & DEWEY REVEALED BY THEIR OWN LOVING MOMS!!
EARL & DEWEY VISIT THE ZOO!! 60 FAB PIX OF THE PASH PAIR!!
ARE EARL & DEWEY ON THE ROCKS?

In July they got a job standing up on a boardwalk bar in an amusement park. Earl hoarded inside the memory of the black murmuring auditorium, the warmth of the spot. Except for some girls Dewey winked at, who hung around till the bartender kicked them out, people paid no attention. The beery smell rose sourly in Earl's nostrils; but the life absorbed him, as Tabernacle had. He owned a competence. He never felt so good as when he had the guitar slung on and he tilted his throat and out came sure words.

The second day back at school, Mr. Wilcox in Civics sent them both to the Counselor because their hair was too long. "You look like pansies," the Counselor said, and Dewey tugged on his belt and grinned. Counselor to Principal. "We got to have long hair," Dewey pleaded in disgust. "We're professional. How else can people tell?" On the bus Dewey said, "They'd cut *it* off too, if you'd let them."

EARL'S SECRET BROKEN HEART! HIS HIDDEN TEARS!
I WAS A HIGHSCHOOL DROPOUT! THE SHAME OF BEING A QUITTER!!

Earl still worked at Fennish's, and Dewey got money from his Mom and older sisters. They commuted into Chicago a lot, looking for work and contacts. They practiced, joined the union, and found an occasional night's work. Dewey was screwing a girl in one of the shops who got them records at a big discount. Dewey missed school; he made up by talking big. Earl didn't. When he realized he would never have to flub another test or be made to stand in class stammering and fishing for words, never have to slump past school election

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posters and wise cliques, he felt giddy with relief. He didn't mind that the people they tried to see slammed the door and told them to get lost. The sinners had been putting him down since he could remember.

> Dear Earl,
> I am writing to you because I love only you and hope you will help me! I have written many times. Please answer me! I was babysitting and the man from upstairs came down. He was tickling me, and before I knew it we were on Mrs. Bly's bed, where It happened. I have not had my period for 3 months. My mother says I am getting too fat. What should I do? Please help me, as I believe in you, because you are Sincere!
> Nancy, age 12

Thanksgiving, Earl quit his job and they hitchhiked to New York, where Dewey said they would get recorded and make it big. Thirty-eight hours later, the last trucker dropped them outside the Holland Tunnel at four in the morning, and they started walking. In New York they couldn't even get into the right waiting rooms. Just before Christmas, without a dollar left for a flop, they hitched back to Chicago. Took them three days, with nothing to eat but a bag of peanuts, because they looked so worn and dirty no one wanted to pick them up.

> HAVE EARL & DEWEY BEEN SPOILED BY SUCCESS?
> We've been seeing stories in the papers that EARL & DEWEY have been rude to fans. We know how brokenhearted you feel if you think such stories are true about your ravin' luvs! We went to see the boys *personally* during their last Smash Tour, and we are glad to tell you that these *ugly rumors* are just another case of *jealousy*!! EARL and DEWEY confided in *yours truly*, and here's the *secret!* EARL is shy!! YES, cross our hearts, that mad doll who is such a livin' gas on stage

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and sends us all straight to *dreamsville*, is shy off stage!!! EARL's still a sweet boy who luvs his family, and luvs to hear from all you who luv him, and is really SINCERE!!!!

New Year's Eve, Chicago. At the last moment they managed to get on a bill with ten other local groups. The show hadn't even finished—they were standing listening to the *Platinums*—when a man came back who gave them a card saying he was Talent Promoter Endsley Bagget. He was a squat gumchewing sorrowful looking man with eyes red as new potatoes, and at first Earl didn't take to him at all. It turned out Endsley owned part of the Franklin Shopping Plaza, and that made Earl sit up a bit, and figure such coincidence must be a Sign. So they went with Endsley.

Endsley had them out to his house a lot. He showed them pictures of himself wearing a soldier's uniform and explained how he did well for himself way back then in Italy. With the capital he had gone into war surplus, and he had made money hand over fist for a long time. But nowadays his younger brother was running the show, and he, Endsley, got interested in Talent.

Endsley showed them pictures of all his previous Discoveries. One was a pretty woman who he said had murdered him with alimony. Another was a tenor now working in the produce department at the supermarket. One got himself drafted, and another disappeared into Las Vegas leaving Endsley with a dental bill for two thousand dollars. Endsley told them how he had loved them all and how they had made him suffer. Earl understood that GOD had been clearing the way for them. He was letting Earl have another chance to reach Him.

Endsley sent Dewey to a dermatologist and underwrote new equipment. He tried Earl without the glasses, but Earl's face drooped and wilted. Then he got an idea. On Earl's long face he strapped a pair of welder's goggles, and over his lank hair, a black leather cap, visor removed. The new face had awful machine-mad power. Insect eyes. Endsley had to pay the

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studio to record them. Neat brownbound notebook in which he wrote down expenses. "B" side, Earl's latest, was the song that began a slow crawl through the lower reaches of charts.

> SWINGIN' is the word for EARL & DEWEY, those newest drool gobs to hit smashville!! From the top of EARL's wavy sandy blond hair to the tip of his toes (meanin' in all, gals, 6'2"!), EARL has the look of a real sincere guy!! Behind those wild specs, EARL has gorgeous blue eyes, and we all know his voice is strictly from luv! EARL reads all his mail personally and wishes he could meet every fan, and so does DEWEY, who has a real great sense of humor! From the top of DEWEY's wavy black hair...

With a station wagon dragging a U-Haul they toured. They slept in the wagon, sort of, and sometimes checked into hotels in the afternoon, to get two days out of one night's price. Earl would have to sneak up. "These cornball stations' deejays'll give me ulcers. Haven't I licked ass all over this country?" asked Endsley Bagget, with grim weariness.

Finally in Chicago they appeared on a big teen show, their song just heaved into the Top Ten. Earl slumped onto the stage, Dewey to his left, and the audience yelled a bit, politely. Through the goggles, he could just see the spot, just take its blinding glare full in his eyes: ghost sun, eye of the distant and still unforgiving God who had shut the lid of his sin on him.

> Beat me in the heart, sweet baby!
> How come you wait so long?
> Take me, shake me, break me
> till all mah doubts are gone!
> Come on sweet baby, sweet baby in long yeller sox,
> Come on sweet baby, sweet baby, built like Fort Knox,
> Come on, sweet baby, sweet baby, pack me up in your box!

Dewey had given him the last rhyme. Dewey crash-banged

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away on the electric washboard and thumped the drum and sang harmony and grinned and winked and beamed and leered. To Earl the audience was a warm pulsing wall of noise. He saw nothing but that bright eye of love, still distant. The screams that rose were born of his suffering. His voice tore from his throat, urgent as something beaten to death, wiry, mean as a kid setting fire to a cat: a raw scummy wail. Under it the rhythm thumped. It was a real, true belly noise. The fourteen-year-olds wriggling and weeping in their seats felt it go right through.

Earl swayed and fretted and tore at the strings. He beat his chest and stretched his spidery arms into the whitehot eye. Hear me, hear me. Not me but Thee. A great wind blowing. Oh, listen, move that rock. Let me through! Girls leapt from the balcony to splash on those below. Popcorn boxes, sneakers holding billet-doux, bottles of cologne and deodorant, and somebody's little brother hailed through the steamy air and dented the stage. Cans of hairspray exploded in the aisles.

Afterwards Earl found his fingers bloody. He stood sucking them while Dewey peeked out at the raging girls, muttering, "One at a time, come on sweet babies, one at a time!" and Endsley, with his hands tucked into his armpits, danced in a rain of soft money. Earl felt let down. He wished he were still out there In Connection. He had let them down too, those wailing ones, he had not broken through or taken them with him. But they looked on him and saw that he was trying and trying for them, and they wept for him and held out their small, weak arms, and shouted his name. He had failed them, but there would be other times.

In this OFFICIAL LETTER Earl & DEWEY would like to express their own personal warm & luvin' thanx to all their loyal fans and special thanx for the following:

Thanx to Selma G. for the handpainted ties.

Thanx to Lila, Gloria and Susie for the Story of Our Lives embroidered on a linen tablecloth, in 7 colors.

Thanx to Nina Z. for the fab views of Niagara Falls.

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Warm thanx to WeeWee and Jo for the steamer trunk of fudge. You can bet we gobbled that up!

Much thanx to Sheila A. for the lifesize DEWEY & EARL statues made of bubblegum. You are one talented gal!

SEND AWAY FOR A REAL LOCK OF HAIR OF YOUR FAVE STARS EARL & DEWEY

YES, He will send you a locket containing His Own Hair!!! To wear round your neck, or tuck under your pillow to dreamland at night! Imagine waking in the morning with Him closer to you than you had ever hoped!!!!

Earl came into the office where fanmail collected one Sunday and ran into the letters asking for his hair. He sat down and cut off smaller and smaller pieces to stuff in the envelopes, but even so, near supper time he cut off the last. When Endsley found him, Earl had his shirt open, using up the leavings on his chest. They fought. Earl did not believe in lying. He knew his fans needed him. He thought of them not as faces but as that one great ringing cry.

Dear Earl,
Do you really love your fans? I love you, and I have been worrying and worrying if you love me? I am the one who sent you the chocolate cake. Did you love it?
Margret, age 22

He visited them in the hospital after they were trampled at performances. They wrote asking him about boys, school, music, God, nuclear war, and how to be popular. They sent him imprints of their lips and their bust measurements and proposals of marriage. Always they stretched out their arms and wept.

Earl stood at the hotel room window, drawing circles on

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the pane. His hair had begun to grow back nicely, and soon he would be able to stop wearing the wig. Endsley worried constantly that it would fly off during concerts. He complained that Earl was getting wilder and wilder, scoring himself with his nails as he sang, beating on his head and chest, thumping himself with the guitar. Always afterwards his fingers were bloody, and sometimes his nose. Endsley accused him of chewing on the calluses at night.

Behind him Dewey was squeezing his nose in the mirror. At shows he would peer out at the sea of percolating girls. "Jesus. I mean, they're yelling for *me*. And hey, I'm ready." Dewey wanted to meet his fans. When girls pinched him, he pinched back. His leer had taken on a drugged skew, but he was still game. Only Endsley stood between him and vast ginch; only Endsley yakking about publicity, and the cop barricade, and the bluey lightning of the photographers and the pushing and shoving and rushing about. Dewey liked to look at the magazines though, and was always trying to make him look. Dewey would finger the pictures. "Yeah, we're having a pretty good time, see?" But Earl would remember the photographers ordering them around. They would have to hang off trees and sit on teeter-totters and wade in fountains and stick their heads through cutouts. It was almost as embarrassing as going house to house for the Brethren, when women would slam the door or sic their dogs on him. He was still being tried.

His mother sent him long letters, composed of Scripture copied in her neat hand. Whenever Endsley gave him one, he felt queasy.

> *Proverbs 1, 10*: My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. *Proverbs 6, 28*: Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? *Revelations 13, 4, 5*: And they worshipped the dragon, which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies....

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He kept sending her presents, but she never mentioned them. Gloria his married sister wrote, though, to say how they liked the color TV and the wall to wall, and to tell him what else they needed. Gloria said Sandra Sue was learning to play the ocarina and dancing in front of the mirror, which made Mom hopping mad. She said one gone to the Devil was enough, ha ha, wrote Gloria. If you happen to meet Rock Hudson, send me his autograph.

Earl wiped the heat of his forehead on the glass. The sky was lilac-color in the crack of Manhattan alley. Down below girls huddled among the garbage cans. Sometimes Earl thought he was about to make it through. The way was hard and narrow. He was sorely tried. At night he lay awake and sweated to think he might be lost again: that his Mom was right and the Devil owned him, and all was sin and error. Could God tease him that way? Soon, he had to know soon.

Not that the girls screaming and waving their arms and rolling on the floor bothered him. He felt they were trying to help. Sometimes he thought he could lead them through too. They all seemed to want something desperately. He hardly felt the fudge and rubber curlers and prunes they pelted him with. He had a small scar next to his mouth where a comb had pierced, but it didn't bother him. The doctor had done a bang-up job removing it. His fiberglass tooth, from the time a girl had flung herself under the car, hardly throbbed any more. He felt stronger and surer in his message. *Someone* must hear him: *Someone* must listen soon. He needed the girls to put him through, oh yes, oh help me now! The rumble of traffic, the mating cat noises of the girls in the alley and the occasional crash of a trashcan they tried to pile against the wall, licked up and faded into the sky. Earl began to hum. The words came up slowly, like dark bubbles breaking one by one on his tongue.

They saved the new song for their biggest show. As often before, Earl could not eat. He sat face to the wall in the sweaty dressing room sucking the tips of his fingers, while Dewey ate fried chicken and sipped his favorite drink of No-cal strawberry soda and muscatel.

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The audience was good: hot and squealing before they were on. It was hard to breathe for the noise. The air felt white. The shrieks whistled down Earl's bones and made his teeth ache. His voice cut out of him like a saw. They did their latest discs, some of the oldies. He could not hear Dewey any longer but only feel the beat up through his legs. He could see nothing, of course, but almost thought he could see the air: electric, smoking, clanging by the time they got ready to do his last song:

Here Ah stan in the dark all alone and cryin,
Here Ah stan in the dark moanin and testifyin:
O sweet daddy beam upon me!
Let your lovin fall on me!
Don't cold shoulder poor gone me!
I WANT TO BE ALL YOURS AGAIN!
Here Ah am in the dark down on all fours and crawlin,
Here Ah am in the dark just creepin and bawlin:
Hey hey hey
Why has the sunshine gone away?
Ah am jis a lump of clay
until you grab mah han an say:
hey hey hey
Ah'm gonna love you at last TODAY!
O sweet daddy enjoy me
please don't no more decoy me,
treat me right an destroy me!
I WANT TO BE ALL YOURS AGAIN!
Here Ah lay in the dark jis hopin and waitin
Here Ah lay in the dark implorin and anticipatin:
Hey hey hey
Ah know ah stumbled, lost mah way,
Ah am jis a lump of clay
unless you hug mah bones an say
Ah'm gonna love you like you never been loved TODAY
O sweet daddy defeat me,
Ah need you to complete me,
tear me! burn me! eat me!
I WANT TO BE ALL YOURS AGAIN!

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As the last words ripped from Earl and they finished with the powerful explosion of blast-off sounds they had worked out through two weeks of rehearsals, the screaming reached an unbearable pitch, a keening that sapped his muscles and turned his bones to toothpaste. Like a man in a high wind, he could not move, could not make his usual immediate getaway. While he was poised there, midstage with his hand still on the strings, he saw Dewey pop up before him, his mouth wide and moving. Through Earl's black goggles, an effect of rising fog, of blowing leaves. The screaming burnt and battered. One of Dewey's drums rolled. Then they were on him.

As he felt the first hands tugging, tearing at his clothes, his own hand went to his mouth. Flailing he lost his balance, but never hit the stage. He landed on wriggling flesh. Hands pulling, fingers gouging, nails ripping at his shirt and pants and hair. The soft weight of squirming flesh at random on his nose, on his suddenly bare foot. Mouths wet and nibbling. Then teeth.

His pain passed into the screaming that leapt, a fire of shrieks, and the spot stayed on him and did not go out. Earl under silver nails. Earl smeared on lipsticked mouths. Earl between gleaming teeth and caught on braces. Earl smeared in a long rusty squiggle on the boards. The hot eye came closer, stayed open, and he passed into the pupil, sighing.

Earl's bones were shipped home, collect, since damage done the building ate into profits. A month later, Dewey left the hospital, spry as ever. Endsley got him a job at a checkout counter in the Franklin supermarket. A couple nights a week he shacks up with a woman from the package store, who buys him his muscatel and appreciates a good dresser. He has given up the electronic stuff, but he plays drums in an outfit that performs now and then at weddings or roadhouses. Called the Five Leaks. They go for the new powerboat sound. Endsley has made tapes of them, but so far nobody is buying.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

INTERVIEW

Ted Berrigan is the author of *The Sonnets* (Grove Press), and *Bean Spasms* (Kulchur), a collaboration with Ron Padgett.

ART

Patrick Caulfield, an English painter, is shown in London at the Robert Fraser Gallery and in New York at the Robert Elkon Gallery.

Roland Michenet is a French painter whose work can be seen in Paris at the Daniel Gervis Gallery. He will have a show of paintings in New York in the fall at the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery.

PONGE

Lane Dunlop has published poetry in the *Hudson Review* and the *Yale Review*; his translations have appeared most recently in *Prairie Schooner* and *Transatlantic Review*.

Sarah Plimpton's fiction has appeared in *Partisan Review*.

Francis Ponge was a visiting professor at Columbia University during the winter term of 1967. Most of his works, including *Le Parti pris des choses*, have been collected in the three-volume *Grand Receuil* and in *Tome Premier* (Editions Gallimard).

FICTION

John Ashbery's most recent book of poems is *Selected Poems* (Jonathan Cape, London). **James Schuyler** is the author of a novel, *Alfred and Guinevere* (Harcourt Brace); his first major collection of poetry will be published this year by ParisReview Editions. "Further Adventures" is a section from *A Nest of Ninnies*, a novel in progress.

Donald Barthelme is the author of *Snow White* (Atheneum). "Alice" appears in a collection of stories, *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts*, recently published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Marge Piercy has published fiction in *Transatlantic Review*, *December*, and *The Bold New Women*. A book of poems, *Breaking Camp*, was published by Wesleyan University Press.

Eric Thompson has published fiction and non-fiction in *Esquire* and *Status*, and written and directed a short film entitled "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"

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POETRY

Vito Hannibal Acconci is co-editor of *0 to 9*. His work has appeared in *Art and Literature*.

Michael Benedikt's first collection of poems, *The Body*, will be published soon by Wesleyan University Press.

Michael Brownstein's poems have appeared in *Mother*, *Angel Hair*, and *The World*. A book of poems, *Behind the Wheel*, was published by "C" Press. He received a Poet's Foundation grant in 1966.

Jim Carroll is the author of a pamphlet of poems entitled *Organic Trains*.

Clark Coolidge was editor of *Joglars*, and has published two books of poems with Lines Press, *Clark Coolidge* and *Flag Flutter & U.S. Electric*.

John Godfrey's poems have been published in *Mother*.

Kenneth Koch recently published *Poems From 1952 and 1953* (Black Sparrow Press). He is the author of *Thank You*, a book of poems, *Bertha*, a collection of plays, and *Ko, or a Season on Earth*.

David C. Lehman will soon be the editor of *The Columbia Review*.

Bernadette Mayer has published poems in *Slice*, *Ice*, *Mother*, and *Lines*. She is co-editor of *0 to 9*.

Aram Saroyan's book of poems, *Aram Saroyan*, was recently published by Random House.

Tony Towle's first collection of poems, *After Dinner We Take a Drive into the Night*, was published by the Tibor de Nagy Editions, New York City.

Anne Waldman is editor of *The World* and co-editor of "Angel Hair" magazines and books. Bok Press will soon publish a collection of her work entitled *On the Wing*.

Lewis Warsh is co-editor of "Angel Hair" magazine and books. He has published two volumes of poems, *The Suicide Rates* and *Moving Through Air*.

Don Weingarten's poems have appeared in *The Columbia Review* and *The World*.

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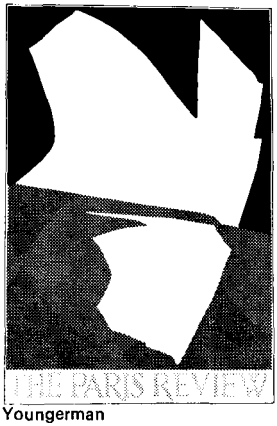

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